

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

INTERNET ISSUE

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April 2005

\$4.00

General Meeting:

I Sold It

page 9

Photo Contest:

Sunset at Lake Buchanan

page 7





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Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



To register for a Class, Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210.736.0080**

If you **didn't** receive your issue of *PC Alamo* or have questions about your membership e-mail:

Sandra Bloom at: membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210.736.0700**

If you have comments about classes call

John Gaddis **210.494.9449**

If you have questions about advertising call

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

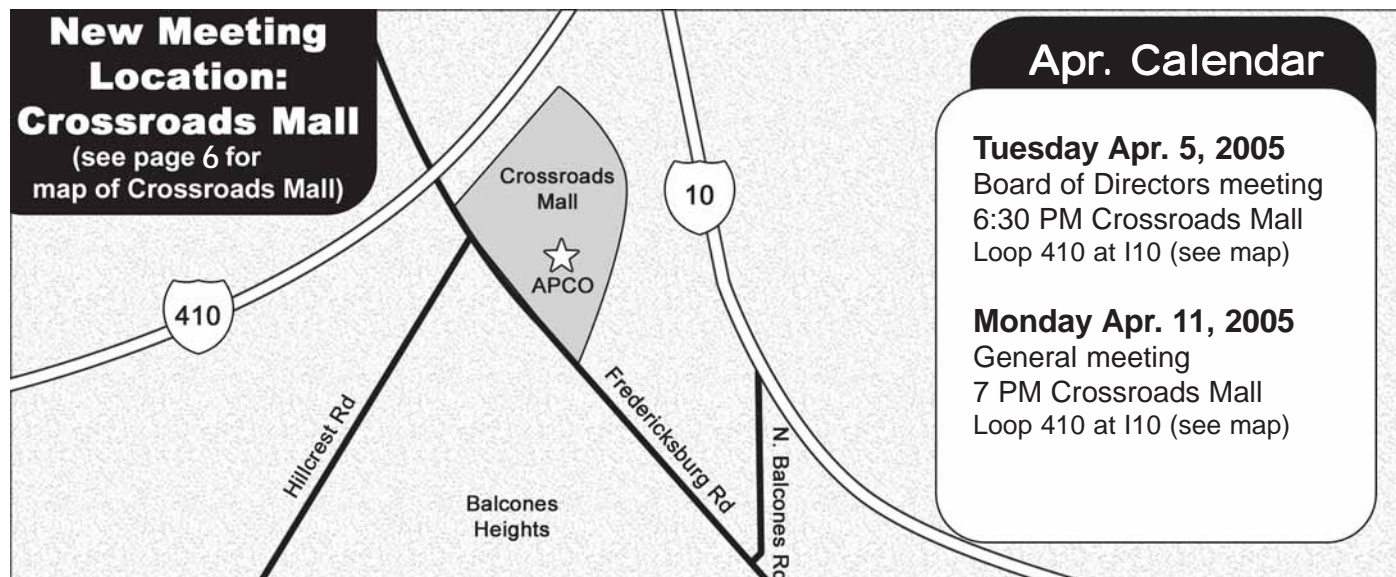
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Meetings are held at the Crossroads Convention Center (across from the Learning Center) located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

The Board of Directors meets normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets at the Alamo PC Learning Center located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events. Open to all members.

New Meeting Location:
Crossroads Mall
(see page 6 for map of Crossroads Mall)



Apr. Calendar

Tuesday Apr. 5, 2005
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Apr. 11, 2005
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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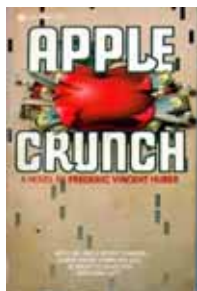
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PC Alamode

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PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication. e-mail to:

editor@alamopc.org

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Full pg. (7 1/4" w x 9 1/2" h)	\$274	\$260	\$246	\$238
Half pg. (7 1/4" w x 4 1/2" h)	144	138	130	121
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*Consecutive months

**To be paid in advance

Alamo PC Directory

Learning Center
736-0700

Board of Directors

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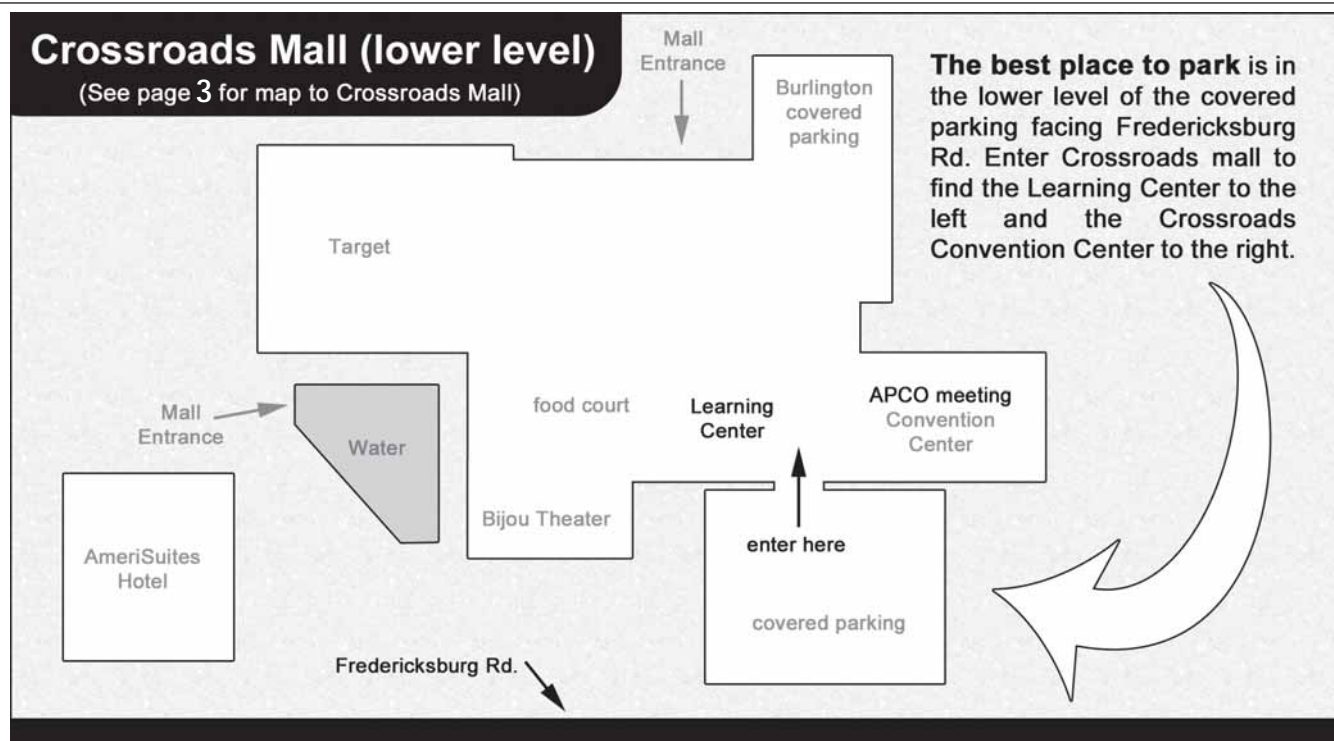
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

Learning Center Manager	Cary & Jean Hall	736-0700 (Learning Center)	learncenter@alamopc.org
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For Study Groups and Classes or for SeniorComp classes, phone: 736-0080



PC Alamode Photo Contest

1st Runner Up

"Horse Power"



Submitted by Betty McSwain

"An annual ice carving contest is held in Fairbanks, Alaska. This picture was taken with a Sony Cybershot DSC P-1 that I had to keep warm (in between shots) inside my heavy parka."

1st Place Winner! (cover)

"Sunset at Lake Buchanan"

Submitted by Wade Forrester

Date taken: December 29, 2004 **Camera:** Nikon CoolPix 5400

Location: Canyon of the Eagles lodge, Lake Buchanan, TX

"We were sitting in the dining room at Canyon of the Eagles lodge and were looking out over the lake. When we saw this spectacular sunset developing, I took my camera outside and snapped a couple of shots. This was the first time I used my Nikon camera (a Christmas present)."

2nd Runner Up

"Zebra Pair"



Submitted by Wenda Gorman

"Here are two zebras that I photographed at the Exotic Zoo near Johnson City, Tx"

PC Alamode Photo Contest Guidelines

1. Submit your JPG file by E-mail to <editor@alamopc.org>.
2. Each member may submit one entry per month.
3. Image will need to be cropped to 4.25" wide x 5.5" tall if selected for the cover.
4. Observe the due date – 10th of the month before publication date.
5. Only the first place winner will be notified.
6. Submit original images only.



We have had many readers write to us about the new electronic format. Many have lauded the change, others were not so happy. In the end, what's best for the organization is not always best for a 64-page publication.

One problem that was cited again and again is with the text layout. The original version of PC Alamode was designed with printing in mind. That same 3-column format does not translate well when displayed on a computer monitor.

You will notice a new format for the text layout of this issue of PC Alamode. I am experimenting with a new arrangement of text. In some places you will see one wide column... in others, two columns. There are even instances where one- and two-column text is mixed on the same page.

This is an effort to make the online reading experience as easy as possible. Please give me some feed back about this new arrangement of text. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please pass that along as well.

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for over 6 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-61.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

Works In Progress!

Since my last message much has happened, primarily at the Board Of Director's (BOD) level. Some of the happenings are "works in progress" and may take some trial and error, and/or time to fully implement. I want to address some of these, so each of our members will be aware of what is being done.

As I stated in my previous message, the Feb 8th BOD meeting lasted about 3 hours. The BOD also agreed to meet weekly (Feb 15th, 22nd, and Mar 1st) before the monthly meeting on Mar 8th to activate many items for the long term good of this organization. Each of these four meetings lasted between 2.5-3 hours. Much was presented by board members, officers and members. It was discussed and, often further discussed as new information was presented regarding things previously presented/discussed. Only when everyone was reasonably satisfied that the primary subject had been adequately covered was any necessary vote made.

The initial focus at each meeting was the things associated with the PC Alamo magazine being online by Mar 1 - Web site requirements; creating, editing, printing and mailing information to members about the decision and providing information to make access easier. In conjunction with that, member information was also addresses, and has been worked to allow online updates. This will allow each member to keep their most current information posted to our membership database. Maintaining a current E-Mail addresses, phone number(s), and mailing address is most important. With that information, we can continue to inform each member of expiration date, items requiring membership votes, very important events, etc.

At these meetings, the BOD addressed the existing organizational structure of Alamo PC and made modifications deemed necessary. The result is intended to streamline the day-to-day running of the organization, provide better accountability for required tasks and maintain a "team concept" at each level and sublevel. This approach should allow for more efficient daily operations and benefit the overall organization and members.

In addition, the BOD addressed the existing number of board member positions and made modification deemed necessary. The final result was to fit the board members to the organizational structure instead of having a certain number of board members and then trying to fit an organizational structure to fit a certain number of board members. With these changes, work must be accomplished to change the Bylaws and Policies & Procedures Manual. Once this is accomplished (target date is Jun 1st) a "membership review" will take place to allow for any suggested improvements, before the final product is voted on by members (target date is in conjunction with the election of board members in August). I believe that each board member agrees that collectively, given time to implement actions to correct our current situations (in a number of areas), we can have the best organization around. We again ask for your help to "Make This Happen."

Please commit to being more actively involved with the Alamo PC Organization. This can be as simple as keeping track of when your membership is to expire, and renewing well in advance (3-6 months). This will save the organization having to expend funds to notify you, which ultimately impacts the bottom line figure. Try to attend some of the monthly general meetings where presenters provide information about current and future software products, news events relating to the future of the computing, and new software/hardware the will be introduced in the near future.

Also, consider enrolling in one or more of the classes that are offered. Remember, one membership entitles one family member to vote, but it entitles each family member in the household

to enroll in one or more free classes during the time the membership is current. New classes are being introduced as requests and instructors can be obtained for the class. We have two first rate classrooms with individual computers for each attendee. No one can ever know too much, and the classroom approach, with an instructor, often facilitates the learning process, minimizes the time involved in learning, and makes interaction with the computer and software more rewarding.

A membership also entitles each household member to receive help with computer problems. This can be telephonically, but is best done through the "Doctor. Is In" assistance (each Fri morning from about 9-12). Someone must bring the computer to our Learning Center, tell one of the Doctors about the problem, and stay with the "sick" computer while an attempt is made to fix the problem. There are no guarantees given, but generally success is achieved and a happy member takes a "well" computer home. Although the service is free to members, with no guarantees given, donations are accepted. At a rate of about \$45-60 at most repair facilities, a small donation would be appreciated. This help the "Doctor Is In" personnel purchase additional diagnostic equipment, and some supplies to help fix "sick" computers at considerable savings to the member. It has worked well in the past and should continue to benefit members who may need the services of the volunteer "Doctors" who have grown in number since the program was first implemented.

As we have also stated previously, we always need volunteers. Our primary requirement is toward having the Learning Center open almost every day from about 9 AM - 4 PM, with a two person, split shifts. Recently we have had unexpected requirements to replace individuals who have had unexpected illness or moves befall them. If you can help us in this area, please call the Learning Center at 736-0700, and make you desires known. If you can answer a phone, you can pretty much assure yourself that you can do the job.

Based on the short notice to the technical staff and those who would provide the information to members about this event, it appears that the PC Alamo going online Mar 1 has gone reasonably well. The few problems that have arisen have been addressed quickly and resolutions have been provided as soon as possible. Not everyone has been happy about the move, but it has helped preserve funds. It is a little early to tell how much of a difference it may make, but we hope the results will be more evident with time.

Yes we may loose some members because of this decision, but we would loose all the members if we hadn't - no organization, no membership. As previously stated, "Whatever the BOD does at this point will not sit well with someone. But, I believe the majority of the membership will see that the BOD is trying to chart a course that is 'Best for the organization.'"

April Program

David Steward



If you are like me, you are constantly kicking around junk (ahem, precious treasures), around your house. You would like to do something about it, but just cannot draw yourself to throw it away. You might have thought about selling it at an online auction house such as eBay, but do not want to hassle with it. Well, read on, help is on the way.

This month's presenter is from a company here in San Antonio called "I Sold It". The "I Sold It" folks will take your items, list them and sell them on eBay for you. They will do all of the photographing of the items, composing of the description, shipping of the items, and collection of the money. When it is all completed, you get a check.

I am very excited about having these folks come and present to us. It is something that all of us, whether we want to admit it or not, can make use of. In addition, they are eBay experts. So if

you have questions about eBay or other online auctions houses, now is the time to speak up and get your question answered.

As usual, the meeting will be held at the Crossroads Convention Center located in Crossroads Mall on Fredericksburg Road, at 7:00 PM on April 11th. Why don't you bring a friend and let them experience the camaraderie of being a member of the Alamo PC? I look forward to seeing everyone there.



As we approach the longer days of summer, with increased activity in the yard and around the house, let's eat well and keep energized to stay up late and surf the net or play with that new software.

Carrot-Apple Salad

4 cups shredded carrots
2 apples, peeled, cored and cut into small chunks
1 20-oz. Can pineapple chunks, drained
¼ cup raisins (optional)
½ cup sour cream
½ cup mayonnaise
¼ to 1/3 cup sugar

Mix carrots, apples, pineapple and raisins. To make dressing, combine sour cream, mayonnaise and sugar. Mix awell and pour over ingredients. Keeps well in refrigerator.

Meat Loaf

1 lb ground beef
1 ½ cups saltine crackers, crushed
1 medium onion
1 medium bell pepper
1 ½ cups shredded cheese, divided
2 eggs
1 t. marjoram
1 t. thyme
½ t. garlic powder
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cans tomato sauce, divided

Set aside ½ cup of the cheese and 1 can tomato sauce. Mix all other ingredients well. Place mixture in 8 ½ x 4 x 3 ½ - inch loaf pan. Mold and leave a trench indentation down the middle. Bake 45 minutes in 325 degree F. oven. Remove from oven and drain well. Pour reserved can tomato sauce over loaf and top with ½ cup cheese. Place back in oven and bake for 15 minutes.

Significant Happenings...

John Gaddis, Education VP

Alamo PC Needs Instructors

Several classes need new volunteer instructors now. We still have not gotten an instructor for Microsoft Word. This is one of our flagship classes and we need help badly. If you or someone you know can fill in here even if only temporarily please let us know so we can continue the class. Our current instructor has a conflict which has developed and prevents him from continuing to teach regularly.

The Computer Literacy class also needs a fill in instructor for two Saturdays in May. The instructor will not be able to teach. He says the assistants are WONDERFUL and the class is a "hoot", to use his words. He would also like to be replaced permanently for personal reasons. The course is designed for beginners and Apconians who want to brush up on their computer skills. Students learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills used in many software programs, and gain a basic understanding of surfing the Web and using e-mail. The course prepares students to enroll in a variety of second level courses.

While talking to Cary Hall, our Learning Center co-manager with his wife Jean, said that most of the classes need assistants. Specifically, Bill Eastridge needs an assistant for his Excel and the Word class which he is teaching until we can get a permanent instructor. Beverly Bihn needs help. Her classes have grown so much that she now needs both classrooms and has a waiting list. If know Photoshop 7 or Elements you can have a great time helping her.

Cary says that SeniorComp always needs helpers. They teach entry level seniors Introduction to Windows, Microsoft Word, the World Wide Web e-mail and more.

Please, call 494-9449 or e-mail jgaddis@iname.com and make the subject VOLUNTEER HELP. We really need YOU! Thanks.

If you are reading this issue of the PC Alamo you are reading it online. Your Board of Directors did much soul searching and studying of alternatives before going from "Gutenberg to Gates". A recent United Press International article supports offering magazines and news letters online.

It states that most major U.S. newspapers offer free Web site access, but that privilege is raising questions in some executive offices.

A recent New York Times article states it would soon announce its decision whether to charge readers who read news via its Web site. The newspaper said as of January, its Web site had 1.4 million daily visitors, or more than its 2004 daily print circulation of 1.124 million.

The Times said the number of people reading other newspapers online now exceeds the number buying print editions. As a result, advertising from online sites has become the newspapers' fastest growing source of revenue.

Let's all work to get our members and advertisers to support out new e-publication which gives us so many 21st Century advantages over paper publications.

Senior Comp Schedule

Bill Hudson, Senior Comp Instructor

Senior Comp Spring Schedule of Classes

Basic Introduction to Windows - covers topics for those absolute beginners on computers

Andy Roca and Donna Dudley
Wednesdays 10am -12pm
March 16 - April 20

Introduction To Windows (formerly Beginning Windows) - covers the fundamentals of using a computer

Don Robinson
Mondays 1pm -3pm
Mar 28 - May 2

Introduction To Windows (formerly Beginning Windows) - covers the fundamentals of using a computer

Audrey Henkin
Tuesdays 1:30pm -3:30pm
Mar 15 - April 19

Introduction To Microsoft Word - covers all the tips and tricks to use your Microsoft Word Program

Mary Lou Daugherty
Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm
March 16 - April 20

World Wide Web and E-mail

Receive pictures of your grandchildren & let your fingers do the walking through the vast world of the Internet

Bill Hudson
Tuesdays 10am - 12pm
Mar 29 - May 3

Greeting Card Class with Print Shop 15 learn to do greeting cards and personal business cards

Jane Montgomery
Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm
Mar 30 - May 4

Senior Comp Practice Lab

Open to Senior Comp Students Only
Joe Gentry and Sarah Thomas
Every Thursday 9am -12pm

Classes meet for six two-hour sessions.

Pre-registration is required Cost \$60.00 (class materials included); \$40 to repeat a class

Senior Comp classes are specifically designed to assist Adults (age 45 or older) to learn how to effectively use their computers.

Senior Comp is a nonprofit with eight years of proven success.

This schedule is subject to change. Please check with the Alamo PC Registrar at 210-736-0700.

ComputerFest is a collection of local and statewide dealers under one roof offering rock-bottom prices on all your computer needs. All of our dealers are independent wholesalers, so each conducts business separately. Most of the dealers will accept credit cards, but with cash you can usually get the best deals. And new products are almost always backed up with a warrantee, so you and your wallet can always feel comfortable with your purchases.

What you can find at the show:

- New Complete Systems
- New Hardware
- Newest Software Titles
- Printers, Monitors, Scanners
- Ink-Jet Recharge Kits
- Imaging Devices
- Internet Services
- Used Hardware
- Multimedia Upgrades
- Shareware
- Diagnostic Equipment
- Cables & Connectors
- Bare Bone Systems
- Computer Related Books
- Refurbished Systems, Monitors

Location:

Airport Civic Center
8505 Broadway @ Loop 410
San Antonio, TX.

Show Dates and Times:

Saturday, April 30, 2005 10am - 5pm
Sunday, May 1, 2005 12pm - 5pm.





From the Deals Guy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

My wife and I worked some great trade shows lately and they just keep coming. We worked some real estate shows that didn't have spectacular exhibits, but they did have great speakers. Since we worked security for the production crew putting together the great entertainment for attendees, we met all the celebrities when they came in back stage. My wife got a nice greeting from Dr. Phil McGraw and we met Tony Robins (famous motivational speaker), Brooks Robinson (Ball player), James Brolin (Marcus Welby, MD. and Hotel) and Katie Curic. The most interesting thing in the exhibit hall was, two guys sculpting a giant sandcastle, which was impressive. They worked the entire show doing it.

Among others, we worked the PMA (Photo Marketing Assn. show). <<http://www.pmai.org>> It was a great show with over 29,000 attendees. All the great names in photography, hardware, cameras and software were there with fantastic booths. Plenty of very large printers were being demonstrated also. Unfortunately I had personal business and ended up with little time to browse that show. The Panasonic booth had a wonderful scale model village as a simulated winter snow scene. It had all the usual old time village buildings and vehicles, some small rotating carnival rides, moving ice skaters on a simulated ice rink, moving snow skiers, a working train and other working models. It was very impressive in about a 12-foot square area. Lights came on in buildings and streetlights when nighttime was simulated. The person setting it up told us he could put one in our living room if we liked, but we told him we didn't have room. (money either)

One day I was entering the show floor and Jerry Stephens from Toronto Users Group yelled at me. You probably remember him from the days when he was active in APCUG. We had little time to talk, but it was sure nice to see him.

The Nikon booth had eight young people dressed in bright yellow jump suits and riding yellow electric scooters all around outside the building greeting people. They were giving out yellow candies on a card inviting folks to visit the Nikon booth and get in on the daily drawings for fabulous prizes. Another booth was giving away USB flash drives, which is getting more common all the time.

Best of all, we worked the Home Electronics Expo <<http://www.ehxweb.com>>, one of my favorites. Talk about a candy store venue; that was it for me. I saw many cabling, switching and speaker booths along with companies for planning your digitally controlled house. There were speakers in all kinds of configurations that could blend into the décor of your house or garden and patio; for example, some looked like a rock <<http://www.stereostone.com>>.

In one booth they had a luxury easy chair with a controller that was precoded for over 680



Weather Hawk

movies (1-888-442-3269). Just pop in your favorite movie on a DVD and the console recognizes the movie and creates the sensations quite realistically for what you are seeing on screen while in that easy chair. It even simulates a bumpy road and only six grand for it all. I often sleep through a movie so that wouldn't work well for me. My proof-reader wondered how the chair handled the bullets in a shooting scene, or a steamy sex scene.

I saw door locks controlled by a sensor that could recognize your thumbprint to open the lock, then the same sensor could recognize another fingerprint to open or close your garage door <<http://www.ekeyUSA.com>>. I may have a deal on them. Another company had technology to track all use of locks in your company and who used them, putting the data on a Web site that could be easily tracked from anywhere by the proper person.

I loved the Panasonic doorbell that had a camera in the button panel. When a presence is sensed, it turns itself on along with a light, if needed, and you could see who was there on a small LCD monitor inside. The entire person was visible, even at close range. That will be out in July and I want one <<http://www.panasonic.com/CSD>>. I didn't see them on the Web site, but maybe soon.



Stereo Stone speaker looks like a rock.

There was a booth with weather stations that were elaborate and looked very sturdy. It looked to be more of a commercial unit and they used a computer monitor for the stats <<http://www.weatherhawk.com>>. They had an attachment that would verbally tell you what you wanted to know, including "please shut your windows as rain is imminent." I saw dozens of big screen plasma and LCD monitors, and TVs. The one that impressed me most was the NEC

61" plasma screen. It was so sharp and crystal clear that it almost looked three-dimensional.

There was just too much to write about in this article, but you can take a look at the show's Web site to see the exhibitor list. It was not a large show, but certainly a good one with about 9,000 attendees. I had notified several editors who asked me to e-mail them it was coming again after I wrote about it last year, but didn't run into them. The NCSA (National Systems Contractors Assn.) show <<http://www.nsc.org>>. will be here March 10 and I hope to at least explore it. I'm told it's a similar type of show, except mostly for contractors and installers.

*Another Deal From Gene and Linda Barlow:

User Group Relations has another interesting and helpful product for you. These days our computer life is chuck full of ID and passwords and we are urged to change them frequently. So how do you remember them all? You could write them all down and hide the list under your mouse pad <G>, or you could get smart and use MyPasswordVault by WhiteCanyon Software to store all those IDs and passwords and keep them at your disposal. Linda sent me the product just before deadline so I haven't tried it yet, but I will soon because it has some great features. Make life easier with this unique product and use the discount offered to users group members to buy it for just \$15.00 (MSRP \$25.00). Go to <<http://www.usergroupstore.com>> and use the special code UGDEALS to order.

*Attention Gamers!

NevoSoft announces a new space shooter/puzzler game below: (edited so check their Web site)

"SAINT PETERSBURG, Russia. - January 27, 2005: NevoSoft

is proud to announce the release of Zzed, the latest version of an electrifying space shooter mixed with lots of action, adventure and puzzle. Zzed will put the player into the spaceship and take on a tough galactic mission with over 60 levels to win. With superb cartoon graphics, exhilarating gameplay and original music, Zzed will be the ultimate source of enjoyment for kids and parents alike.

"The game comes to life as Zzed, a young and ambitious alien, has been sent on a special mission by his corrupted boss, Mr. Zzapone. There, in the backwoods of the galaxy Zzed will have to protect the space foundries of his boss from vast space garbage fields.

However, the real reason of the mission is Zzapone's fear that Zzed will throw him down the corporate throne. Zzed leaves home with a heavy heart as the assignment separates him from his beloved alien sweetheart. To win the ticket back home, Zzed has to remove all space garbage from around the galaxy."

"Zzed is not all about shooting. The game will also challenge your reaction and thinking, said Alexey Serebrov, CEO of NevoSoft. "As you go from level to level, the speed of garbage fields increases. Therefore, you will have to act fast and smart.

"Availability: Zzed runs under Windows 98/Me/2000/XP and costs \$19.95 (USD). Registered customers are entitled to the unlocked gameplay, free updates and lifetime technical support. An evaluation version of the game limited to the 40-minute gameplay is available for free at: <http://www.nevosoft.com/zzed/zzed_demo.exe>. For more information, visit us at <<http://www.nevosoft.com>>. Use a 10% discount for purchasing the game for user group members. Just use coupon - ZZED-3B51 - during ordering process and you get the game only for \$17.95 (instead of \$19.95). Or you may simply order discounted Zzed by clicking on this link:

<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?&ss_coupon=ZZED-3B51&item=8323-15>
We didn't see the discount coupon working yet, so you may have to e-mail them as I had no time to contact them at this point. Sorry!



Cyber Criminals - Who and Why?

John Brewer, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace.

Why do some individuals have the need to engage in cyber crime? I refer specifically to those people who write code that damages networks and the computers connected to those networks.

According to a recent article in Internet News: "Tracking virus writers -- and more importantly, gathering evidence against them -- is a thorny problem for law enforcement agencies worldwide. While the number of arrests made and sentences handed down make 2004 the best year yet for catching cyber criminals, it won't have a noticeable effect on eliminating virus writers, according to the Finnish security firm F-Secure."

F-Secure states there were three "primary security-related trends in 2004: a massive increase in phishing attacks; the introduction of open-source botnets and for-profit virus writing."

Phishing is the term used for fraudulent emails that seek to obtain information from the recipient. This information is used for nefarious purposes including identity theft. An article on MSNBC.com states that consumers are susceptible to phishing. The anti-spam firm MailFrontier Inc. showed 1,000 consumers examples of so-called "phishing" e-mail as well as legitimate e-mail from companies such as eBay and PayPal. About 28 percent of the time, the consumers incorrectly identified the phishing messages as legitimate. Now that is a frightening statistic, as 28% is a high rate.

A botnet is generally a trojan that has penetrated security safeguards and is resident on a computer. When that computer connects to the Internet, the botnet will connect to an IRC channel. Then other infected computers connect to the channel and a botnet is formed. The person who created the botnet, often called a "botmaster" or "botherder," can then control the computers that are connected to the botnet. For example, the botnet could be used to launch a denial of service attack on an innocent Website or computer.

The major viruses in 2004 consisted of Bagle, MyDoom, Netsky, Sasser, Korgo and Sober. Three of these were designed for specific crimes according to F-Secure.

The intent of MyDoom and Bagle and its many variants was to create spam proxies. These viruses caused damages in the millions of dollars and created denial-of-service attacks on Microsoft.com and SCO.com.

According to F-Secure, at one point MyDoom.A was responsible for 10 percent of all e-mail traffic. Both viruses used the Mitglider proxy trojan. Officials at F-Secure suspect the two viruses may have been written by one group of writers. Bagle.A downloaded the Trojan from a Web site, and it was installed through a backdoor in MyDoom.A-infected machines.

The Korgo virus was designed to grab credit card and banking information, according to F-Secure. Similar to the Sasser worm, the virus targeted Windows 2000 and XP machines, scanning random IP addresses for PCs with a vulnerable, unpatched Local Security Authority Subsystem Service (LSASS).

Internet News reports it is difficult to trace and apprehend the cyber criminals. "If there's an increase [in arrests and indictments], it's very, very slight," said Paul Bresson, a spokesperson for the FBI, about his agency's efforts to combat virus writers. "We tend to devote our resources depending on the volume and scope of what's out there, and if there's a lot out there, we devote more resources."

The international nature of the Internet means many criminals can leave a long, convoluted trail that crosses national boundaries with ease, even if law enforcement agencies cannot. Despite actions by the Federal Trade Commission to promote cross-border communications and aid, there are still blind spots where virus writers can flourish.

Mikko Hypponen of F-Secure says that whenever he speaks with law enforcement contacts about tracking spammers or virus writers and it leads to places like Romania or Belarussia or Lithuania, "you hear this sigh from the investigators, because they know it became that much harder to gain local cooperation."

"The bad guys know how to re-route their spam and their viruses and their hacking through six, seven, eight different countries and go through places like China and South Korea and some obscure island in the South Pacific just to make it hard for the authorities to track them," Hypponen says.

As an example, he points to a recent case where a Russian factory was hit with a virus by a hacker group operating out of Kuwait. The virus, after gaining access to the machines, started downloading more code from a Web site registered in a small island off the coast of Africa. The actual Web server, however, wasn't there; it was registered through Sweden to Jordan. From Jordan, the infected machines in Russia downloaded code that connected them with an IRC chat system operated in chat.cnn.com -- CNN's chat server in the U.S.

Hypponen said it was a relatively easy matter for his company to call CNN and the ISPs in charge of the Web server to blunt the effects of the outbreak, but it's something police would have had a tougher time accomplishing.

"If the Russian factory would have called the cops," he said, "how likely would it have been for the Russian police to first of all successfully track the virus around the globe and how likely is it that they would have been able to prosecute the Kuwaiti offenders?"

Sarah Gordon, a security expert at Symantec, has engaged in extensive investigation of the personalities of cyber criminals. "All those years of research and contact have revealed that many myths about virus writers are just that. The stereotype that virus writers are all young teenage boys with no social life, hiding in their basement is not accurate," she said. In contrast, she said, most virus creators are typical for their age, are on good terms with friends and family and are often contributors to their local community.

"Whatever the reason for writing a virus, all these groups share a common blindspot, says Ms. Gordon, which is that they have no conception that what they are doing can affect the wider world. "They do not connect the impact of what they do on the computer with the impact on another person," she says.

"But, once they realize that it can have an impact on other people, they age out of it and stop."

Her research has shown Ms. Gordon that there is a real difference between virus writers and hackers. While virus writers are usually socially adept, many hackers are not. "When you see a complex virus," she says, "it's come out of the hacking community." In her experience many malicious hackers have a borderline criminal view of the world and do not share mainstream ethical norms. Their judgment processes might be different," she says, "as well as their perception of risk and reward."

In my humble opinion, I find it difficult to excuse this sort of behavior, regardless of the reason.

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Backup Basics

Russell James, Alamo PC

Russell is General Manager at BJ Associates of San Antonio, The Laptop Specialist. They are an authorized service center for Toshiba and Sony systems. They are the laptop specialist and also handle system builds and parts for desktops. They take care of any IBM compatible hardware or software problem that you have. e-mail <russell@bjassociates.com> or visit them on the web at <<http://bjassociates.com>>.

Preventive Maintenance

I have talked about computer disaster recover plans many times in the past but it seems that the word is just not getting out fast enough. This week we had three customers that lost everything without a plan and another that made it to us just in time to save most of his data. He got lucky. If you are one that has heeded my warnings and instituted a plan, then we will consider this a refresher course for you. For those of you who think that nothing bad will ever happen to you, this article is for you. It seems that the people who have a good plan are the least likely to have a problem. This could be for some other reason besides the planning, but it does seem to be a fact that holds true for the most part.

The first thing you need to know to come up with a backup plan is what you want to backup. Most of the machines on the market today come with some sort of recovery software that will reinstall all of the software that came with your system. This type of software is good because it will help you to recover from a disaster by giving you a known starting point in your plan. If you have the reconfigure software, I would recommend that you plan on using it in case of disaster and simply keep up with your data backups. This will make the recovery process a lot easier when the time comes. All you would need to do is run the recovery software and then restore your data and you would be back in business.

Now let's look at your data. How much room, in megabytes, would it take to store all of the data on your system? Since we are planning to use a recovery disk, we only need to look at items like email, letters, spreadsheets, financial programs and the like. Anything that you have made changes to would be considered data. You need to make a point to find out where each of the programs that you use stores the data file that you are using. If you are going to backup only the data, then it would be easier for you if it was stored in one convenient place. You would think that all of the software companies could get together and agree on one central location but this does not seem to be the case.

Microsoft Money puts the file in the folder where the program is installed by default. Quicken and many other programs use the same process. Windows 2000 and XP default most of the programs file saving location to the My Documents folder. This folder is actually a folder under the Documents and Settings folder. This tends to confuse most of the users since they click on a shortcut to get to the My Document folder and the files show up. It really doesn't matter where the files are stored as long as you know where they are when you do your backup. You have the option to change the location by right clicking on the folder and then left clicking on properties. You can then click on Move and browse to a different location from the default. After you have chosen a new location you will be given the opportunity to move any existing files to the new location. My users at the office have a folder on the network that stores all of their data files. They click on My Documents and most of them have no clue that they are pulling files from a network drive. This also allows me to backup their data files when the server is backed up every night. This helps me as well as them in case there is some sort of disaster or hardware failure.

Take a look at the programs that you use and find out where the files are located. Microsoft Money uses one file to store all of your entries. When you move the file, Money will ask you

where it is the next time you open the program. Browse to the new location and you are back in business. The program will default to the last file that was opened so you will only have to look for it once. Quicken will also default to the last file that you had opened but you will need to use the file utilities within the program to move the files to you're My Documents folder. This is because Quicken only shows you one file when you open the data file, but there actually are four files, all with the same name and different extensions. If any of the files are missing, you will not be able to open that particular data file.

Email is another type of program that likes to hide your data from you. Microsoft Outlook defaults to another folder within the user folders. Everything in Outlook is contained in a file with the extension pst. You can find the location of the file by searching your hard drive for a file with the pst extension or viewing the properties of the personal folder in the folder view of Outlook. Click on the Advanced button and the location will be shown under filename. If you move this file into you're My Documents folder, the next time you open Outlook you will get an error message saying that the pst file cannot be found. Browse to the new location and choose the pst file that you moved to continue opening Outlook. There will be another message stating that the location that messages were delivered to has changed and would you like Outlook to recreate the shortcuts. Choose yes and you will be finished with the move. Outlook Express will need to be moved within the Options of the program. Click on the Maintenance tab and then the Store Folder button. Click on Change and browse to the My Documents folder. There are a number of files that contain all of your Outlook Express data so a separate folder to segregate them from the general population would not be a bad idea. Shut down and restart the program to finalize the move.

No matter what program you are using, it is always going to be easier to keep up with your files if you will have a central location. You will need to do a little work to get all of the programs set up to use the same location but I can assure you that it will be better for you in the long run this way. Make a point to look through your programs and find out where your data is. I have seen more than my share of people without a plan that have lost everything. You don't want to be the next one do you? Start with getting all your files in one place and then we can talk about how to get these files backed up on a regular basis.



MailWasher for Spam

K. Joyce McDonald, Alamo PC

Joyce is a contract technical writer specializing in Internet/intranet infrastructure documentation. Visit her Internet domains at <www.jbmcdonaldandson.com> and <www.taichi-interactive.com>. E-mail her at <kjoycemcdonald@satx.rr.com>.

This article is a follow-up to last year's articles which describe first, my original concern over spam, second, my efforts to reduce spam through Outlook filters, and third, my installation of Firetrust's Mailwasher in an effort to combat an ever-growing spam problem.

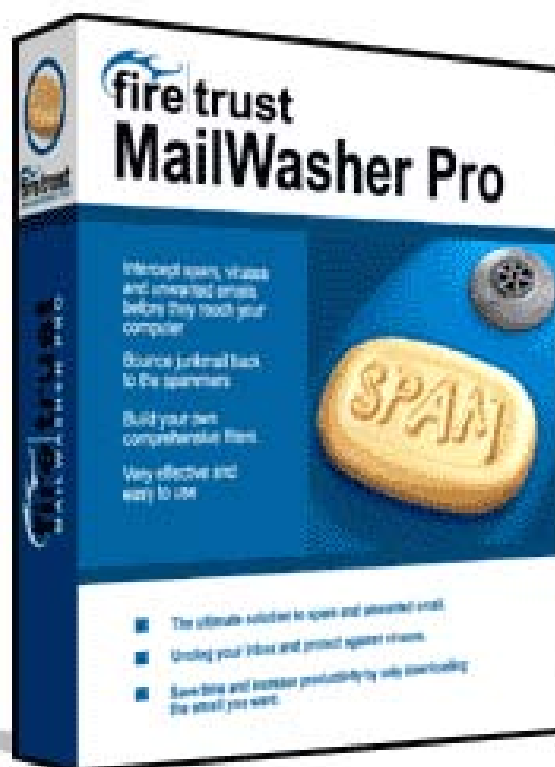
I have been using Mailwasher Pro (from www.firetrust.com, \$37) for the better part of a year now, long enough to become comfortable with its features and confident that it serves a purpose. Although it is not perfect, Mailwasher is cheap and if you are patient, it will help you combat spam, although you will probably never eradicate it. The attitude change that I mention in the title doesn't indicate that I like spam any more than I used to. I have just come to be more realistic about it. I will never eliminate spam, so I have settled for the next best thing: I delete 75% of it before I see it. I'll tell you how in a moment.

Using Mailwasher I have gained several insights into spam. The first is an understanding of the purpose behind the seemingly random strings of words that appear in a large percentage of the spam I receive. For example, the first body line of an e-mail might read "Aggregate telephone boxwood hermetic glandular calendar bottle mousepad." Not exactly prose that would convince you of the need for Viagra, fake Rolexes or black-market software. The collection of random words becomes visible when you view e-mail in text-only format, the only way Mailwasher displays it. The message itself is usually formatted in HTML or displayed by a graphic. The cryptic text is not visible in HTML format, and the purpose of the text is to confound spam blockers to make them conclude that the content is legitimate. It serves much the same purpose as the curious spellings you often see in the subject line, such as V!agra", "V[iagra", "V!agra", "V)iagra," and the like. In other words, both are designed to bypass standard spam filters.

Another insight I have gained is that spam is not going to go away. After six months of developing friends lists, blacklists and filters, I'm getting more spam than ever. All I can do is to keep spam from taking over my inbox and maybe life. In late November of 2004, I came home one evening with a migraine headache. I did not check my e-mail that evening or even the next morning. A full forty-eight hours elapsed before I could check my e-mail. When I did check, I had 70 e-mails, 60 of which were spam. An interesting fact is that although Mailwasher has not actually cut down on the amount of spam I get, I still find it a useful program. Several features contribute to this conclusion.

The first feature is that you can set up a single computer to monitor mail for multiple users and multiple accounts. I use the word "monitor" because Mailwasher does not retrieve mail from the server at your e-mail provider or ISP. It lists the messages you have and lets you see (in text format) the content of each message. If the message is an HTML message or a graphic, you see the source code, as Mailwasher does not display graphics or HTML.

I have three primary e-mail accounts. I have all three set up on Mailwasher, which enables me to check all three accounts at once by clicking the "check mail" icon. This is a wonderful time saver, especially for the two special purpose accounts that get few messages.



I like the fact that the e-mail is not downloaded from the server. I can delete suspicious e-mail and blacklist the sender before the mail ever touches my mail program. This enables me to protect myself from viruses as well as save time that would be spent downloading junk mail. Second, I check my mail from one computer, but sometimes want to retrieve my mail on a different computer. I like to keep my mail archives on my laptop, but it may not be hooked up when I check my mail. I can check my mail from my desktop computer without downloading the messages. Later, I can use Outlook to retrieve my mail on my laptop.

Speaking of Outlook, an interesting thing happened when I set up Outlook on my desktop computer. Sometimes I do want to retrieve my mail to my desktop, so I set up Outlook Express

with three different identities, one for each e-mail account. Before I started using Mailwasher, I had these identities set up on my laptop, but I always had to switch identities (which amounted to closing and reopening Outlook Express) before I could check the mail from a different account. Now, however, OE retrieves the mail from all three accounts to a single "In" box. To be truthful, I do not know how I achieved this, but I like the results. I concluded that it may have had something to do with Mailwasher, but I'm clueless as to the connection.

I used to like Mailwasher's "Bounce" feature, since it gives one a feeling of revenge. However, I have found it less and less useful. A primary reason is that bouncing is more time-consuming than deleting, especially if you have a lot of spams marked to bounce. Once bounced, the spam probably ends up in some electronic dead letter box anyway. On occasion, if the spam is infected, it will get bounced back to me. Since I don't want to be spewing virus-laden boomerangs around the 'net, I quit using the "bounce" option.

On the other hand, I find the delete and blacklist options quite useful. When I first started using Mailwasher, I edited each blacklisted address to include only the domain and not the name of the sender, since this enables me to blacklist anyone else from that domain, a likely source of spam. Editing scores of addresses, however, became too much of a chore, so I just check the "blacklist" box next to the junk mail and move on to the next item. I have built up a sizable blacklist, so I think this feature is helping a small amount.

Mailwasher's real workhorse is the filter option. Mailwasher was automatically set up to flag e-mail that was not to me. It sounds strange that I receive e-mail that is not to me, but I receive a considerable amount of spam that does not actually include my e-mail address in the "To:" line. I have set up an automatic filter to flag and delete those messages without displaying them. I also have automatic deletion filters to intercept any messages containing the words Viagra, Cialis and Rolex (and their various spellings) in either the body or subject line.

I have even set up similar automatic filters to delete mail from some friends. Who has not been plagued by at least one "friend" who sends the "joke of the day" or the electronic equivalent of a chain letter weekly? More likely than not, these same friends use mail clients (such as Outlook), armed with extensive address books, creating a perfect environment for automatic virus-laden rogue mass mailings. I refuse to take chances opening attachments, even from people I know, if the content and subject line do not clearly explain why the attachment was sent. When I get a message from a known culprit and it contains an attachment, especially if the subject line contains the word "Fwd:" I have instructed Mailwasher to delete the offending message before I see it.

I will continue to use Mailwasher until I find something better. I mentioned in the June, 2004 issue of PC Alameda that after testing Mailwasher, I planned to advance to a challenge/response type of spam filter, one through which you refuse all mail except what you receive from people in your address book. Anyone not in your address book has to respond to a message automatically-generated by Choicemail. If Choicemail does not receive a response from the sender, the original message is deleted and the sender, blacklisted. I downloaded a trial version of Choicemail. Unfortunately, Choicemail starts the trial timer when you download the software, not when you start using it, so it expired my trial license before I installed the program. I downloaded a new copy and installed it, only to be told that my trial period had expired. The fact that Choicemail knew it was expired did not prevent it from altering the configuration of my Outlook program to the point of unusability. I had to uninstall

and reinstall Outlook to gain use of it again. Choicemail has been marked off my list of possibilities. If you know of a challenge/response spam program that you would like me to test, please write.

Using MailWasher Pro is as easy as 1, 2, 3...

- 1** Press 'Check Mail'
- 2** Mark unwanted emails for learning, report or delete
- 3** Press 'Process Mail' to get rid of unwanted email

Learn	Delete	Status	Size	From	Subject
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Probably Leg	3.0KB	tracerlock@tracer	new new
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Probably Leg	2.0KB	Enrique Aguirre (e	Question
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Probably Leg	661.6KB	Jonathan Simpsor	MailWas
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		16.2KB	MarketingSherpa	[Sherpa]
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		23.3KB	Bruce Hadley (hax	Software
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		5.3KB	W E Owen (weow	MailWas
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		9.0KB	newsletter@hphh	Good thi
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		9.8KB	mailer-daemon@c	Returned
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		11.7KB	Max & Carol Yates	Baby on
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Probably Sp.	40.7KB	22014635@prodn	Is that yo
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Blacklisted	42.1KB	Michael Stroud (in	Earlybird

Double click to download full message into the

Preview: MailWasherPro

I am interested in purchasing MailWasherPro. As a novice who is well beyond retirement age, I don't have a clue how via my computer. I'm not very interested in putting credit

Paying too much for healthcare?

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<http://ushealthadvisors.net/davebobst>

USA
United Service Association
For Health Care



Anti-Spyware Toolbox



Bruce Cramer, Alamo PC

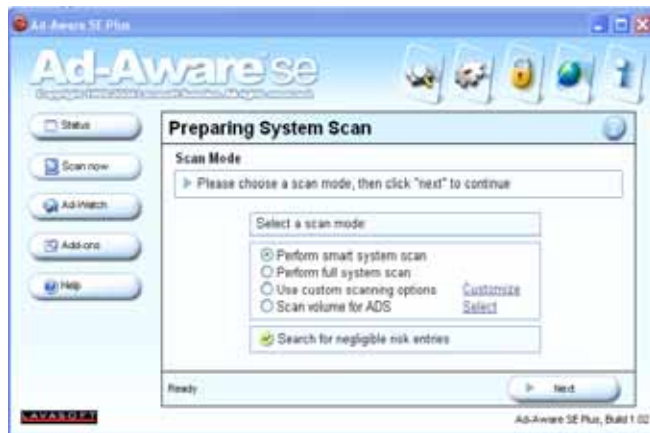
A+, Network+, Microsoft Certified Professional (Windows XP). Bruce is retired from the Army. He is the owner/operator of PC Pro Computer Services <www.pcpro4u.com> where he provides in-home/on-site computer services. He is a regular at the Doctors Is In on Friday mornings, at the Learning Center and has never met a piece of malware that he couldn't get rid of. Bruce can be reached by e-mail at <service@pcpro4u.com>. See his ad for PC Pro Computer Services on page 21.

With the ever evolving issue of spyware, aka malware, the question remains what to do about it. The old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" certainly applies here. With the proper applications and safeguards in place you can keep these buggers out of play. However once they get in the mix they are sure to gum up the works and will take some real work to get rid of.

Malware, like viruses need advanced, dedicated software that are made especially for the detection and removal of the malicious application. There is a litany of software programs on the market to help detect & remove different types of malware. When I speak of malware I am referring to browser hijackers, those little monsters that take over your Internet start page and won't let you surf to the page you want to, key loggers that record your key strokes and report the information back to the mother ship and other malicious software that generally keep you from enjoying your computer.

Here we will look at 5 anti-malware programs. We like free so let's take a look 3 free and 2 pay programs.

Ad-Aware SE Personal, free, by lavasoft, <http://www.lavasoftusa.com>. Ad-Aware was one of the first guys on the anti-malware scene. The company is based out of Sweden and has a global presence. Lavasoft now makes several versions of their popular Ad-Aware product. The free version, Ad-Aware Personal SE, does a good job of scanning and is relatively fast which may or may not be a great selling point since it seems that the applications that take longer to scan tend to find more.



Ad-Aware program

It does have a nice, clean interface and most of its features are customizable. Updates are easy to obtain and can be set to download automatically when the program starts. Ad-Aware does not provide constant real time protection. Ad-Aware must be manually initiated to perform a scan.

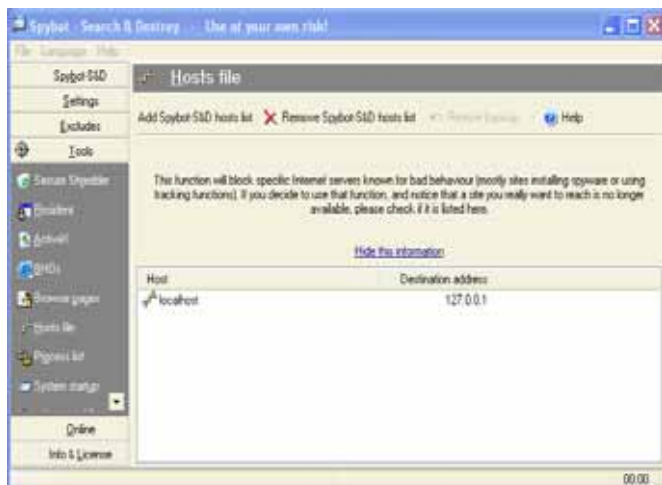
AntiSpyware Beta, free, by Microsoft, www.microsoft.com. Here is a new kid on the block from the king of the jungle.

As you'll notice this is a beta version of the software which means it is still in the testing mode. It was release on January 6th of this year. Microsoft makes no mention of when the program will be released in its final version. I have been using the program on several machines for over a month as of this writing and have been impressed with its results. I have seen it catch several real malicious pieces of malware that others didn't including Trojan downloaders which are capable of downloading and launching files from the Internet on your computer. It also downloads a program from the adware class to your computer. This program then directs the Internet browser on your computer to a portal where other types of adware and other versions of the trojan will be downloaded to the infected system. AntiSpyware lets you perform an Intelligent Quick scan or a Full System scan. Obviously the full scan will take longer but may detect more malware if it is present. It provides real time protection and automatic updates like most antivirus applications do. AntiSpyware also protects your Internet browser from being hijacked and alerts you to programs trying to insert themselves in your startup menu. While I am impressed with Microsoft's anti-spyware contender I wish they would have included the option to eliminate malware as it is found during a scan. Some of the other anti-spyware applications give you this ability. AntiSpyware only works with Windows XP, Windows 2000 or Windows 2003 Server.

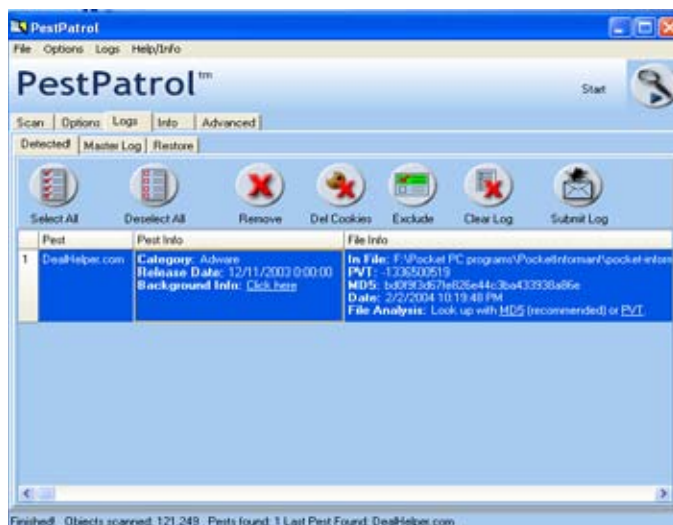


AntiSpyware Beta program

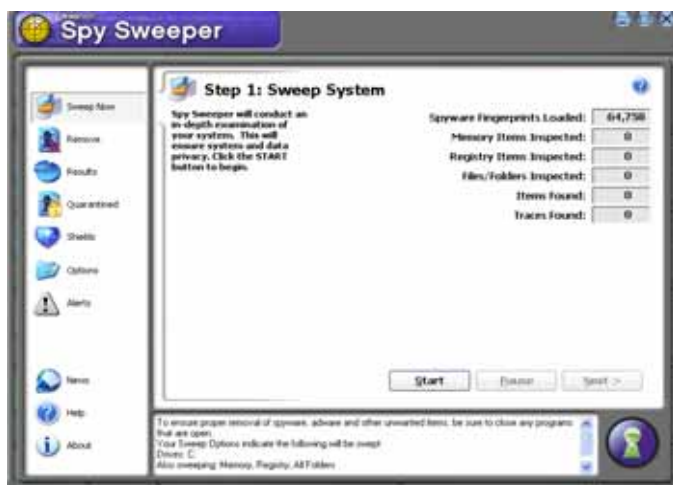
SpyBot, free, <http://www.safer-networking.org/en/download/index.html>. Spybot is a veteran anti-spyware program and came on the scene about when Ad-Aware did. I don't care for the interface as much as AdAware's but there are many settings



Spybot Search and Destroy program



PestPatrol program



Spy Sweeper program

that let you fine tune it just about any way you want. In the settings menu you can check out your host and your Winsock file which is what Windows uses to help your computer connect to the Internet and many malware programs attack this file crippling your online connection.

Different anti-spyware applications may report on different things. Spybot has had a problem of reporting DSO-Exploit as a problem. DSO-Exploit was an Internet Explorer vulnerability that has been fixed with updates many moons ago however I still see Spybot reporting it. Spybot also reports elements of Windows Media Player and the Weatherbug program. The bottom line with SpyBot is that you need to be careful before you delete what it catches, you might miss out on the weather report or your latest tunes.

PestPatrol, \$29.95, by etrust, www.pestpatrol.com. PestPatrol is one of my favorites. I was trying to exorcise an evil piece of malware from my daughter's computer last year and none of my usual tools would work. I called on Mr. Internet who tipped me off to PestPatrol. I was amazed at the speed and veracity of the program. PestPatrol will update itself and run in the background for real time protection. I like the fact that PestPatrol will let you neutralize the pests as they are found and then it will continue the hunt right where it left off. PestPatrol also lets you see the name of the pest and its location as it finds it.

If I were left off on a deserted island and could only have one anti-spyware application PestPatrol would probably be it. The only thing that I don't care for is PestPatrol's "pop" sound that it makes as it stops cookies from running. But hey, at least you know the guy is on the job.

SpySweeper, \$29.95, by webroot, www.webroot.com. I tried SpySweeper at the urging of a magazine review. SpySweeper is fast and thorough. You can stop a scan and delete what miscreants have been found but unlike PestPatrol you will have to start the scan all over again. SpySweeper has a set of "shields" that give you real time protection from browser hijackers, malware trying to insert itself in your start menu, manipulate your host file and other villainous activity. Webroot offers a free 30 day trial of SpySweeper.

While keeping malware at bay is not rocket surgery no one anti-malware application has the claim to fame of being the master of this field and it is suggested that you use more than one reputable application.

Before trying out any anti-malware application I recommend that you first surf over to http://www.spywarewarrior.com/rogue_anti-spyware.htm and check it out. Some of the guys that claim to be on your side actually aren't.

Good luck and stay safe.



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Windows XP, Part VII

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for six years. He has contributed for the past five years.

Win9x/Me/XP Computer tips & tricks

Many questions continue to arise as to the purpose of the Function keys. These keys on your keyboard are shortcuts which help you in many ways. In addition to using them with MS Word, you can also use them in games.

F1 - Get Help or the Office Assistant

F2 - Move text or graphics

**F3 - Insert an AutoText entry
(after Microsoft Word displays the entry)**

F4 - Repeat the last action

F5 - Choose the Go To command (Edit menu)

F6 - Go to the next pane or frame

F7 - Choose the Spelling command (Tools menu)

F8 - Extend a selection

F9 - Update selected fields

F10 - Activate the menu bar

F11 - Go to the next field

F12 - Choose the Save As command (File menu)

Quick Launch Bar

You only have to click items in the Quick Launch bar once to open them, and, if you leave the Taskbar visible, those icons will always be available for your use. If Quick Launch is not visible on your computer, you must right-click the Taskbar (The bar that includes the Start button and the clock.). If "Lock the Taskbar" is checked, click it to unlock. Now right-click the Taskbar again, click Properties, Show Quick Launch, Apply, OK. By default, the Quick Launch bar includes icons for Internet Explorer, Show Desktop, and Windows Media Player. Show Desktop minimizes all Windows so you can get to icons on your desktop. The other two open Internet Explorer and Windows Media Player, respectively. Icons are easy to remove from the Quick Launch bar. For example, if you want to dump the Media Player icon, right-click it and click Delete. To add an icon, you first create it by clicking Start, All Programs (or Programs in Win 98/ Me/2000). Find the program, such as Microsoft Word, and right-click it. Click Create Shortcut and drag the new shortcut to the Quick Launch bar, if you can see it. If not, drag it to the desktop, then on to the Quick Launch bar. You can expand the Quick Launch bar by dragging the right border. Quick Launch works best if the Taskbar is always visible by right-clicking the Taskbar, selecting "Keep the Taskbar on top of other windows," and clicking Apply, OK.

Welcome Screen

WinXP has a Welcome screen and a selection of icons from which you can choose one. But you don't have to use the

icon; you can use any picture. If you want to use a picture of yourself on the Welcome screen, click Start, Control Panel and double click User Accounts. Next click the account that you want to change. Click "Change the picture," "Browse for more pictures," and navigate to the file you want to use. Now click the file, Open, then, click Change Picture. If you don't have a Welcome screen, you can add one. Double click User Accounts, and click "Change the way users log on or off." Place a checkmark in "Use the Welcome screen." If, on the other hand, you're tired of seeing the Welcome screen, there's a way to get rid of it. Click Start and Control Panel. If you see a User Accounts icon, double-click it; if not, click the Switch To Classic View link and then double-click the User Accounts icon. Under "Pick A Task," click the Change The Way Users Log On Or Off link. Under "Select Logon And Logoff Options," uncheck the Use The Welcome Screen checkbox. This step also un-checks the "Use Fast User Switching" checkbox. To use the Fast User Switching feature, you're stuck with the Welcome screen. However, you can keep using the Welcome screen with or without the Fast User Switching feature.

Windows Automatic Updates

WinXP has a Windows Update feature that will allow you to do some or most of this process automatically. First, open the Control Panel from the Start Menu. Open the Performance and Maintenance category, and choose System. Click the Automatic Updates tab, and choose which level of automatic updating you prefer by clicking it under "Notification Settings." Then click OK and close the Control Panel. Depending on which option you choose, little balloon messages will appear in the System Tray when updates are available.

Windows Explorer Toolbar

WinXP has many Toolbar customization features including one that lets you move the icons on your Links Toolbar in Windows Explorer. To use this feature click Start, All Programs, Accessories, and then Windows Explorer. For each icon you want to move, click and drag the link to a different location on the Toolbar. If you can't move any icons, select Toolbars from the View menu and click to uncheck the Lock The Toolbars option.

Windows Media Player

There are numerous tips and tricks to enhance your Media Player experience. 1. You can create audio CDs with Windows Media player using existing audio tracks on your drive. However, you must first create a play list of all the desired tracks. These tracks can be a mixture of MP3 and other files. Windows Media Player can handle both file types. Keep in mind that most CDs have 74 minutes of play time available so the total length of your tracks must fit within this limit. With your completed play list, click on Copy to CD or Device and your tracks will be listed for you. Every track with a tick next to it will be copied. Make sure there's a blank CD in your burner and

click on Copy Music. Now you'll see a percentage progress bar as the program works its way through each track. When it's finished you'll see a message and your drive tray will open. 2. You can sing along to your favorite track by clicking on View, Now Playing Tools, Lyrics. 3. For Windows Media Player Updates, you should click on Help, Check For Player Updates. 4. You can click on View, Statistics in Media Player to see all the facts and figures on the files that are currently playing on your computer. 5. To skip back one track, you should press Ctrl+B and to fast forward press Ctrl+F. 6. For details of all your audio hardware, go into Sounds and Audio Devices Properties and click on the Hardware tab. 7. You can even watch DVDs in Media Player, but you'll need a decoder pack at <www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/windowsxp/dvdplay.asp>. You'll only be able to access the DVD tab in Options once a suitable decoder has been installed on your machine. 8. To compare video clips, you must run two copies of Media Player at the same time. Launch one then right-click on the icon and choose Run to start the other one. 9. To ensure that Media Player is the default for all your audio and video, select File Types tab under Options and check the file types to include. 10. It's best to convert all your MP3 files to Windows Media Audio as file sizes can be halved with no loss of sound quality.

Windows Messenger

You can use Windows Messenger to see when your friends are online and exchange instant messages and files with them. To start Windows Messenger, click Start, All Programs, and Windows Messenger. If already signed in to Windows Messenger, you do not need to perform the next steps. If not, click the "Click here to sign in" link. When the .NET Messenger Service dialog box appears, type your password. Make sure that you type the uppercase and lowercase letters exactly and then click OK to sign in. If you are not currently connected to the Internet, a dialog box may appear, allowing you to connect to it. If you have added contacts to your list, they are displayed as currently online and not online. New e-mail messages are indicated for your information. If you have a Hotmail e-mail account, the number of new e-mail messages you have received is displayed on your screen. If for some reason you want to remove Windows Messenger, go to

<http://www.dougknox.com/xp/utls/xp_mess_disable.htm>.

Windows Scheduler

Some programs can be set in Windows to run automatically. The Windows scheduler does not appear to allow executions more than once daily. But, with a little extra work, you can schedule them as often as you like on your computer. It works for Win98/Me/2000/XP as follows: Click Start, Programs (All Programs in XP), Accessories, System, Tools, Scheduled Tasks. Next double-click Add Scheduled Task and click Next. Now click the program you want to start, Next, select Daily, and click Next. Set the time, select Every Day, set the start date, and click Next. Check "Open advanced properties for this task when I click Finish," click Finish, select the Schedule tab and click Advanced. Finally, select "Repeat task," select any settings needed, and click OK twice.

Windows XP Central

WinXP Central is a WinXP support Group. It offers a place for you to come to get the best possible help with different aspects of WinXP Pro/Home. You will find excellent information, tips, file links, drivers and even a Tech page to help solve issues or just answer general questions about WinXP. Whether it be drivers, bios updates, XP tips and tricks, you can find it at this site

<<http://groups.msn.com/windowsxpcentral>>.

Windows XP SP2

Some computers may freeze during the SP2 installation especially if they are using a motherboard BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) that does not include support for certain Intel Pentium 4 and Intel Celeron D processors. To download the 459KB update that will help fix this bug, type in <<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads>> in the Address field of your browser window. After Microsoft's Download Center page loads, type KB885626 in the Keywords text box and click Go. Click the link named Critical Update For WinXP (KB885626) and, on the right side of the page, click Download to begin the file transfer. When the file transfer is complete, double-click the file WindowsXP-KB885626v2-x86-enu.exe and follow the on-screen prompts to complete the installation.

Word Count Toolbar

The Office XP Tools, Word Count command works the same way as in earlier versions of Word. But, the new Word Count Toolbar has changes to it. You can turn on the Toolbar either by choosing the Show Toolbar button in the Word Count dialog box or by choosing View, Toolbars and then selecting Word Count. The Toolbar includes a Recount button and a drop-down list with options for counting the words, lines, characters, pages, and paragraphs. Open the list, and pick the desired count. If you type something new, Word will replace the count with a message to click on the Recount button. You can then click on the button to update the count, or you can use Alt-C. When you first turn on the Toolbar, it displays as a floating Toolbar, which can be distracting to your work. Drag it to the Toolbar area at the top of the Word window to set it as a fixed bar.

ZDNet has several programs that are free and can be downloaded to tweak WinXP. One is Glass2k. It's a simple program that lets you make any window or Taskbar transparent. Another is CustomizerXP that lets you customize XP in many different ways including changing 80 registry settings.

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Wonderful Wizards of SBS

Larry Lentz, MCSE+I & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging W2K3

Larry Lentz is an MCSE + Internet, an MCSE on Windows 2000, a Microsoft Certified Database Administrator, an MCSA: Messaging on Windows Server 2003 and Exchange 2003, and Past President of Alamo PC. He is the owner of Lentz Computer Services, www.LentzComputer.Net, which he founded in 1989. Larry has over 22 years as a computer professional and specializes in Microsoft Small Business Server. He chairs the MCSE Advanced SIG affectionately called 'The Geeks' and the Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group (SBS SIG). Larry is available for presentations on technology for small business and can be reached via e-mail at Larry@LentzComputer.Net

When you go out to your car, you put your key in the lock and start your engine. Why don't you turn on the spark, put it in neutral, put in the hand crank and crank it to get it going instead? Because you've learned to use the 'wizard' the car manufacturer provided for you in the form of the starter and ignition system. With Windows Small Business Server 2003®, Microsoft has provided a wonderful set of wizards for starting up (configuring) SBS. Unfortunately not everyone uses these wizards, at least at first. The main culprits are MCSEs (like me) and folks who are used to large (Enterprise) systems. Somehow they feel they know better and using the wizards is 'beneath them'. Luckily I learned at an early age (SBS 4.0 in 1997) to use the wizards. James Fogg, a contributor to the SBS List newsgroup (sbs2k-subscribe@yahoogroup.com), recently stated 'As someone coming from enterprise Windows environments I had a hard time accepting the advice I received about how "SBS is different", and the advice to "always use the wizards". I was not so stupid as to ignore the advice, so I didn't have to learn the hard way, but I can now say it's all true.' The wizards take of all the 'little things' that make SBS such a great package. Ignore them at your peril.

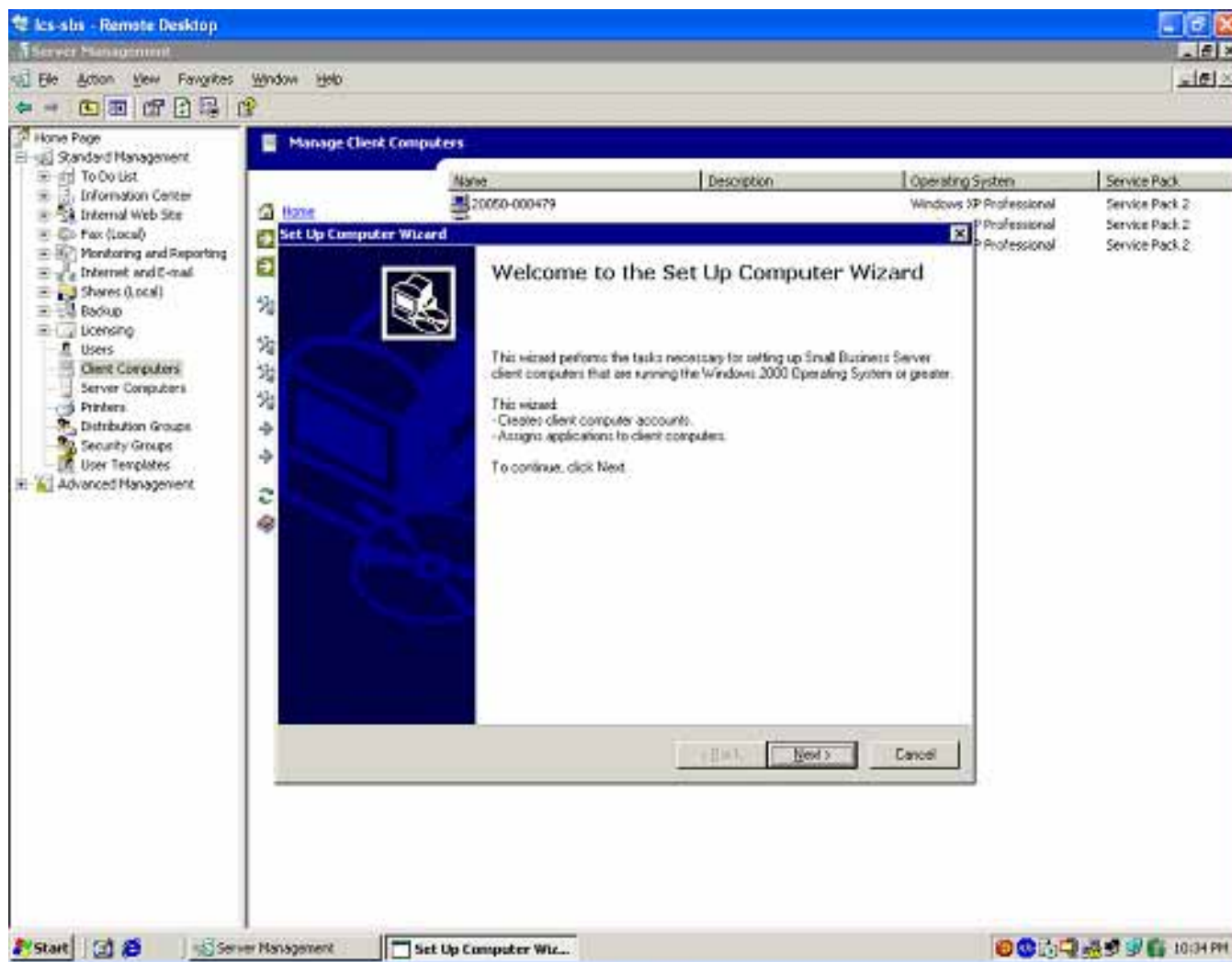


Figure 1

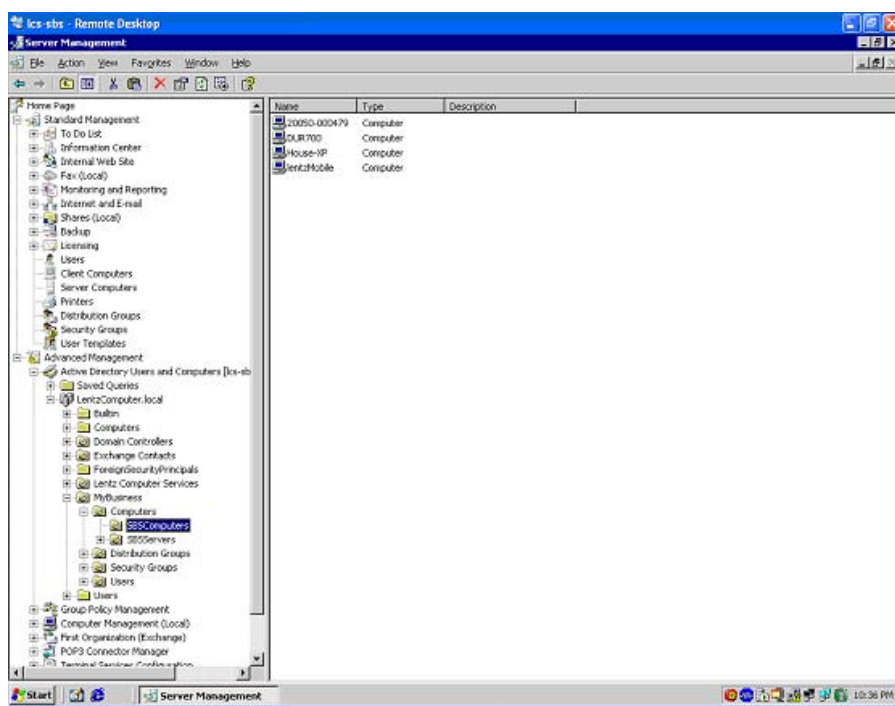


Figure 2

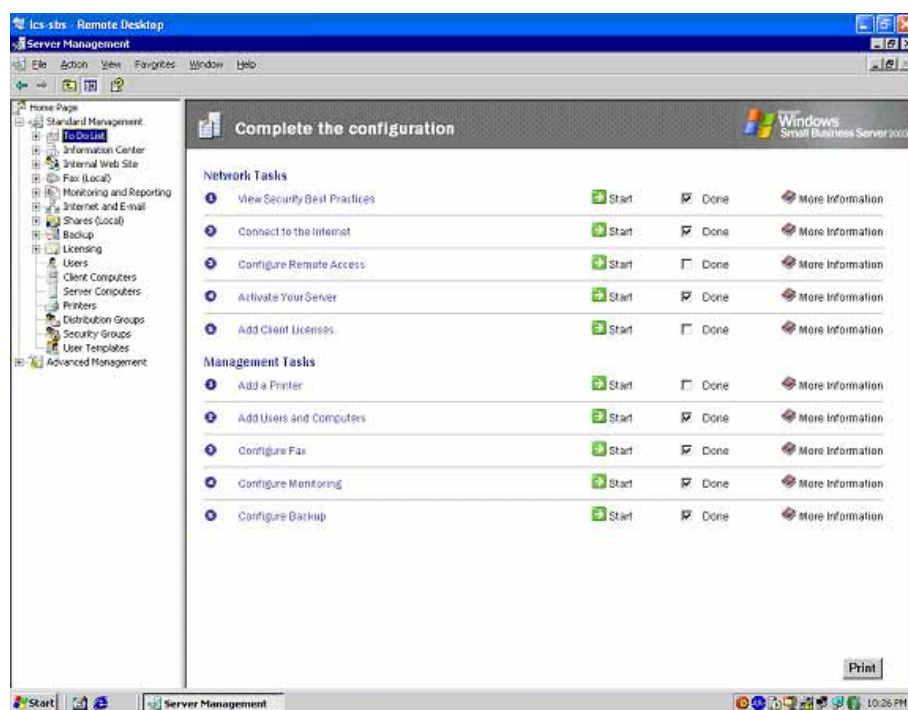


Figure 3

I recently had the opportunity to work on a Small Business Server where the original installer had not used the wizards. The individual users and computers had been joined to the domain manually instead of using the Set Up Computer Wizard (figure 1). Of course all appeared to work. But, when you add computers manually, their accounts are by default placed in the Computers container in Active Directory. When using the wizard, they are placed under the My Business organizational unit (OU), actually a few levels deeper in the OU hierarchy (figure 2).

This may be a subtle nuance but it can have big consequences. I installed ISA Server on the SBS server. Having done that, I now needed to install the ISA Firewall Client on the users' workstations. Normally I create a Group Policy Object (GPO) and link it to the My Business OU. This way it is automatically installed on all of the network computers except the SBS server itself. The SBS server is in the Domain Controllers OU. However since all the computers were in the Computers container and you can't link GPOs to a container, I linked it at the domain level. This worked fine for the workstations. However I noticed that it took for-e-ver to log onto the server. I mean an hour! I eventually figured out it was because the GPO also installed the Firewall Client on the server. A big no-no I learned. I won't do that again. I reconfigured the workstations using the wizards and moved the GPO to the appropriate OU. Then the server logged on fast and the workstations had their Firewall Client so they could access the Internet. Had the wizards been used in the first place, I wouldn't have had this problem.

When you first install Small Business Server 2003, the installation process ends with the To-Do List (figure 3).

This provides a handy way to work your way through the primary wizards to properly configure your server. They are presented in the recommended order but can be run in the order that best suits your needs. Once you've used the wizards, you may go back and make your own adjustments if you must. But run the wizards first.



Becoming and Independant Consultant

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane just wants to know if this works or not. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com>.

I often get questions from those who entering the marketplace on how to present themselves as professional consultants. And then they ask me how much they should charge for their services. I've often been at a loss to answer their questions. Here are some ideas that I've picked up over the last few years.

Intangibles

In the present market, technical skills aren't enough. You've got to present yourself as having a skill set that places you above the competition. Technical workers need a good mix of non-technical expertise. These skills include demonstrated leadership, mentoring, and team building.

Develop Your Personal Sales Pitch

Have you ever heard of the Elevator Pitch? It's a brief statement (often heard at job fairs) summarizing who you are and what you do, much like a cover letter on a resume. Focus on a few key points to attract the client's attention. Don't sound too formal or overly rehearsed.

Learn to Network

It's always WHO you know. To be successful, you can't rely on just yourself. Get out and connect with other people. Develop a personal network of friends and colleagues. Some of your best leads will come from referrals. Attend technical road shows, conferences, classes, job fairs, and special networking events designed for techies. Join technical organizations and computer user groups (like those sponsored by Alamo PC). Have lunch or meet after work with former associates, fellow technicians, and potential clients. Everything goes better with food. Your main goal in all of this is to put yourself out there and be known.

Know Your Audience

Before getting in front of a potential client, know everything there is to know about them. Know what they do and what problems they face in their business. Focus the presentation of your skills on how you will help solve their problems and be able to benefit their bottom line.

Be a Closer

Before leaving the table, be prepared to follow-up. Identify any action items established during the meeting and set specific dates for action to take place.

Be Patient

Don't be discouraged if you don't land jobs immediately. It takes time. Jobs aren't necessarily as abundant as they were a few years ago. Just remember: if you stop looking, you're out of the game.

How much do you charge?

So, now that you've landed a client, how much do you charge for your services? I've often been told to simply divide my desired annual salary by 1,000. For instance, if you want to earn \$50,000 per year, you need to charge \$50 an hour as an independent.

Is it really that simple? It hasn't been for me. There are dozens of factors to consider and you'll need professional help to get a real answer. However, over the next few paragraphs, I'll give you some information to gather.

Hidden Fees

Working for yourself, you're responsible for paying your own federal taxes, to include what your former employer was covering for your part in Social Security. And, as an independent, you may have other taxes and fees. Items to be aware of are state and local taxes on business income, business property and inventory taxes, and fees for business licenses. You may find that half of your income is eaten away by these taxes and fees.

Providing Your Own Benefits

If your former company provided you with several benefits, especially insurance, you'll need to figure out how to replace those. If, as a free agent, you can't get these benefits anywhere else (i.e., from your spouse's employer), then you'll have to figure in the cost of purchasing these benefits yourself. You'll also need to consider professional insurance to protect yourself from lawsuits that you expose yourself to when going into business for yourself. Possible benefits to consider are health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, professional/business liability insurance, and retirement plans.

You'll probably also want some vacation time. When you go into business for yourself, you may be tempted to spend every free minute (including weekends) working. If you do this for very long, you'll wear yourself out fast.

Business Expenses

Business expenses, though many are tax deductible, still cut into your income. General startup expenses include computer hardware and software, office equipment and furniture, business stationery and marketing materials, web site programming and design, and initial salable inventory (if applicable). Next, look for regular, recurring expenses such as marketing and advertising, car and other business travel, business entertainment, telecommunications services, accounting, legal and other professional services, professional books, subscriptions, memberships, and payments on business debt.

Seek Professional Advice

Once you've gathered all this information and made your best estimates, it's time to get some professional help to put it all in perspective. Get an accountant or financial planner that specializes in helping small businesses. Have your advisor determine an hourly rate that you should charge based on your estimated number of billable hours per year. Compare this figure with what the competition is charging in your area. Be careful. You need to charge what the local market will bear—but you have to charge enough to keep yourself in business. If you're going to make a mistake, start out charging too much than too little.

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac

Switching from MS Outlook to MS Entourage

Shane's a Mac user. Assist in his quest to learn OS X — e-mail him at <mac@vpwn.com>.

I've talked about the client who needed help moving her Outlook settings from her Windows PC onto her new PowerMac G5. I related that our initial attempts were not that successful. However, over the last month, I uncovered some new answers.

I expected moving from Outlook to Entourage to be easy. Both are Microsoft programs in their Office Suites. Shouldn't Entourage have an import function to import Outlook's PST files?

Early on, Microsoft attempted to make Word 6 for Mac an exact version of Word 95 on Windows. Mac users criticized Microsoft for ignoring Mac user guidelines. This led to the creation of the Microsoft Business Unit (MBU), with the aim of giving Mac users a true Mac experience in Microsoft products. Therefore, cross-compatibility between versions is not a priority. Entourage imports contacts from Outlook Express 5, Eudora, Netscape, Now Up-To-Date, Claris, and Palm—but doesn't support Outlook. It doesn't import calendar data or notes from any program. When asked why Microsoft didn't provide a conversion path for Outlook, Dan Crevier of the MBU and Development Manager for Entourage said that they made a decision to choose the email clients and PIMs that were most important to their target users."

I guess Switchers weren't their target users!

The Fix

There's a workaround for importing contacts. Data may be exported from Outlook in tab-delimited fields to a text file. Then, using Entourage's generic import tool, a mapping of Outlook fields into Entourage's equivalents can be made. This method is clumsy because there are many mismatches in data fields. There are some 87 contact fields in Outlook 2000 and 92 in Outlook XP. There are around 60 in Entourage, with only 40 actually equivalent to their Outlook counterparts. Each of the fields is called something else, and they're all in a different order.

Importing email messages is less of a problem. Install Mozilla (<http://www.mozilla.org>) on your PC, making sure the email option is installed. In Mozilla Mail, select Tools, Import, and then select the Mail radio button. Select Outlook from the next dialog box and your Outlook email will be imported into the correct folders. In Windows, your mail folders will be created as files located into a Documents and Settings/username/Application Data/Mozilla/Profiles folder somewhere. Add .mbox extensions to these files. Next, copy the .mbox files to the desktop of your Mac. Once on the Mac, drag each .mbox icon from the desktop to Entourage and click Import on the dialog box that appears. This will move your email from Outlook to Entourage on the Mac.

These methods can't import calendar or task data. The most popular way to import calendars and tasks seems to be using a Palm to sync the information with the Mac.

The Easier Way

To automate these processes, Paul Berkowitz developed over 50 specialized AppleScripts for Entourage. They are available for download at www.applescriptcentral.com under the title of Export-Import Entourage X v1.3.1. The scripts will export just about everything in Entourage to any other instance of Entourage, to

archive text files, and to Excel, and provide converters for exporting and importing a subset—Contacts, Calendar, Tasks, and Notes—to and from Outlook (all Windows versions and Outlook 2001 for Mac) and to other Personal Information Managers (PIMs) if they have Export/Import text file features.

The scripts take care of all contact discrepancies. The scripts add any unmapped fields containing information to the Notes, properly labeled, on a per-item basis, without cluttering them up with empty fields. Similarly, they will set reminders for calendar events and tasks and transfer Outlook's more exotic fields that have no Entourage equivalent to the event and task Notes, so you don't lose any data.

I haven't had the opportunity to try all these scripts first hand yet, but I'm looking forward to it. If anyone out there takes the plunge, write me and let me know how the conversion goes! This seems to be the best method available to us until Microsoft gets their programmers in gear.

David's Essential Domains



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Tables Part II: Table Width

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a former president of Alamo PC. She archives these columns on her Web site, www.susanives.com/. If you visit, you can cut-and-paste the code instead of retyping it from the magazine – the ultimate in lazy Webmastering!

I tell my classes that HTML is like music.

When a composer writes a score, it is a combination of notes and symbols that can be performed by the Berlin Philharmonic or by your Uncle Fred on his harmonica. Same notes: different sound.

When a Web designer uses Hypertext Markup Language the principle is the same. HTML is designed to be played on a variety of instruments: big and small screens at high and low resolutions; PCs and Macs and even cell phones; on Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. It adapts. Same code: totally different look.

This is critical to understand when you are using tables.

Tables were intended to be used like spreadsheets: containers for tabular data. That didn't last long. The artistic bunch quickly figured out that tables could be used to control layout. Want three columns? Use tables. Want to divide a graphic so that different sections link to different URLs? Use tables. Want blank space? Use tables.

This is where the tricky bit comes. If you're using a table for data, looks aren't that important. If you're using table for layout, looks are everything.

Let's go deeper.

One of the attributes, or parameters, in the `<TABLE>` tag is width. One way to set the width is by the number of pixels: `<TABLE WIDTH="700">`. This works fine if the person viewing your Web site has their screen resolution set at 800x600. Their screen is 800 pixels wide and the table is smaller. What happens if they have a very hi-res setup, say, 1280x1024? Your table will take up about half the screen. That might be the effect you are trying to achieve. Or not.

And if they have an older computer with 640x480 resolution? Your entire Web page will have a horizontal scroll bar and the bottom of the browser to capture those final 60 or so pixels. The table will slop off the right edge of the screen. This is dysfunctional and ugly. Most people don't even realize that they have a horizontal scroll bar, yet alone use it.

A more elegant way to handle table width is by percentages: `<TABLE WIDTH="85">`. At 800x600 this will be about the same as `WIDTH=700`. At 640x480 it will be 544 pixels wide. At 1280x1024 it will be 1088 pixels wide. It grows and shrinks to accommodate the screen size and resolution.

The table width will be overridden by a graphic or other filed-width element. If you plunk an 800 pixel wide graphic into a 700 pixel wide table, the table's going to be 800 pixels wide.

That's fairly straightforward. Where it gets tricky is when you start specifying the width of columns within a table.

Column width can be specified within the `<TD>`, table data, tag. If you don't specify a width, the column will be wide enough to contain all of the data, no wider. If you have, say, three columns of dense text, the browser will probably make them all the same width.

In theory, `<TD WIDTH="200">` will create a column 200 pixels wide. In theory, `<TD WIDTH="25%">` will create a column 25% of the total table width. Ah, life should be so easy.

Different browsers handle tables differently. In general, if you set the width, at 200 for example, the column will be no wider than 200 pixels. Text will wrap. However, if you put something in it bigger than 200 pixels (like a 300 pixel wide graphic) it will be as big as the biggest thing. If the content of the column is smaller than 300 pixels (say, one word) it will probably be only as big as that one word.

Drat!

There is a way around it: the transparent GIF. If you have a column that needs to be at least a particular width you can force it out to that size, even if there is no data in the column at all, by stretching it with an invisible graphic.

The Image tag allows you to specify the size of a graphic: ``. Even if the graphic is only one pixel wide, it will stretch out to 200 pixels. This would look weird if it was a photo of your Uncle Fred (he of the harmonica) but if the graphic is invisible you don't have to worry about distortion.

You can download an invisible gif of your own from the Lazy Webmaster site, www.susanives.com/lazy. If you have to ensure that a column is at least a particular width, insert the invisible dot as an image and set the `WIDTH` attribute to that number of pixels; set the height to 1. Although this is typically used to specify width, it can obviously be used to specify a particular height as well: `` will create an apparently empty box, 200 pixels square.

If you use the invisible dot be sure to include an empty alternative text attribute and to specify that there is no border: ``. This will prevent the secret dot from revealing its presence.

One more attribute. If you have two or more columns that you want to have equal width, set the attribute as *. All columns with this attribute should have equal widths: `<TD WIDTH="*">`

It's important to get the math right. If you don't, the browser will try to sort it out itself and the results may not be either logical or pleasing.

Webmasters have coined the term "liquid design" to describe tables that grow or shrink according to screen size and resolution. The way to do this is to leave the width attributes in at least one of the <TD> tags in a table blank.

In a three column design you might have the far left column contain a specified width, by using a clear dot and/or specifying the width so that the text on the page clears a background graphics that has a left border (for examples of left border background graphics visit Boogie Jack's free graphics page at <www.boogiejack.com/free_graphics.html>.) You can then leave the other two <TD> width attributes blank and they will auto-adjust to fit the content. Or, you could specify one of them, either using a fixed number of pixels or a percentage and leave the third one blank.

How you handle this is up to you. Sometimes, when I have an intricate design, I will use all fixed column widths (I generally design with a 800x600 screen in mind.). When the design is more flexible, the columns are liquid.

A couple of work-arounds if you are using fixed rather than liquid design:

Center the entire table so that if the screen resolution is higher the additional white space will be distributed equally on both sides. Just use the center tag: <CENTER><TABLE>...</TABLE></CENTER>

Add one additional column on the right, fill it with an attractive tiled pattern, and leave the width blank: <TD background="pattern.gif">. At higher screen resolutions, the white space to the right of the table will be filled with a pattern.

If you want a pattern or color on both right and left sides, the easiest way is to add the pattern to the body tag: <BODY background="pattern.jpg" leftmargin=0 topmargin=0>. By setting the margin attributes to 0 you will avoid having a slice of the color or pattern at the top of the screen. To make your table have a white background, just specify the color in the table tag: <TABLE bgcolor="#FFFFFF">. Center it.

To summarize:

1. Give columns that need to have them fixed pixel widths.
2. Give other columns percentage widths.
3. Leave at least one column with a WIDTH of * (the default) so that it takes up the remaining space when everything else is displayed.

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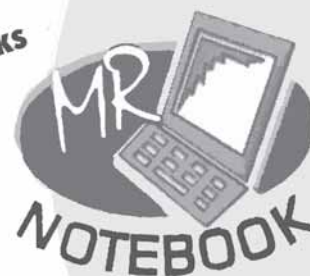
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Build a Web Page in Photoshop

Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer. He also writes the Mac Guy column in the Business section of the Sunday Express-News newspaper. If you would like to a specific topic addressed, email Paul Vaughn at <pauly@mac.com>.

Living in the Internet Age is a pretty remarkable experience. There is a wealth of information just a click away and anyone can publish his or her own web pages. Many Internet Service Providers even give you free web hosting space with your account. Of course, the problem is that few people actually know how to create a web page from scratch. This month we take a look at how my favorite application, Adobe Photoshop, can help you create your web page without knowing a lick of code.

The first step is to design and build your web page graphic. You can do this in Photoshop or you can use an illustration program like Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia Freehand or Corel Draw and then import it into Photoshop. Size the graphic to fill a standard-sized browser screen, about 800 x 600 pixels (Fig. 1). This month's example was put together in Photoshop with a photograph and some text. I also added some capsule shapes behind each line of text to use as a rollover, a graphic that will change interactively when the cursor is over that menu item on the web page (Fig. 2).

Once you have your web page design, you need to divide it up so that some areas will respond a mouse click. This process is called Slicing and Photoshop gives you several tools for doing it. In the Tools palette there is the Slice Tool below the Magic Wand (looks like a knife); but because the design of this page is pretty simple, I can use the New Layer Based Slice command from the Layer menu (Fig. 3). Click on each of the capsule layers and repeat the command. You will now see a grid showing the sliced areas of the image (Fig. 4). In the final web page, each cell of the resulting table will contain a separate piece of the composite graphic.

You can only do have of this process in Photoshop itself, now it's time to take the image into Photoshop's companion program, Adobe ImageReady. This app gives you the rest of the tools to build your interactive web page and is included when you install Photoshop. To move the document into ImageReady, click the Edit in ImageReady button at the bottom of the Tools palette.

ImageReady looks and feels a lot like Photoshop. Make sure that ImageReady is showing the slices (View > Show > Slices) and select the top slice with the Slice Select Tool (on the Tools palette it looks like a knife with an arrow cursor next to it). Note that only the slice you are selected on is shown correctly, the others displayed lighter so you can tell what you're working on.

Pull up the Slice palette (Window > Slice) and you can fill in the information about that slice (Fig. 5). In the Name field, replace the default name with a more descriptive name, in this case

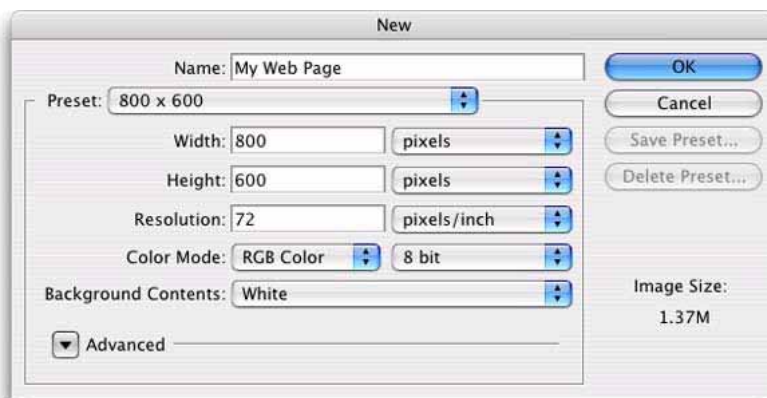


Figure 1



Figure 2

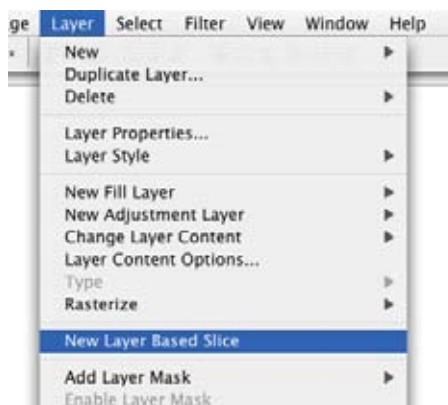


Figure 3



Figure 4

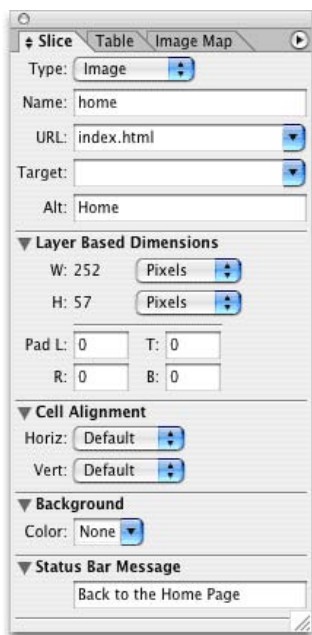


Figure 5

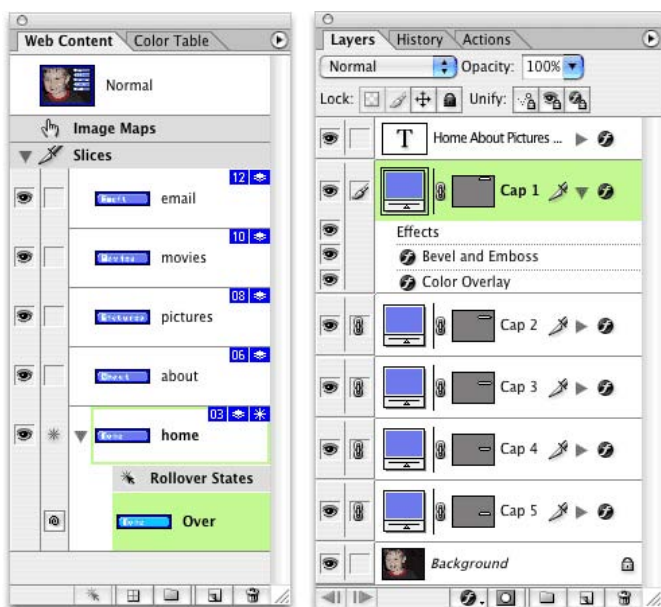


Figure 6

'home'. It is best to avoid any spaces or special characters. For the URL, type the web address of the page to which you want to create a link. It can be just the filename of an HTML web page (in this case index.html), or it can be a full address starting with http://. Target you don't need unless you are using Frames or want the link to open in another browser window. Next to Alt, type in the text you would want seen if the viewer turned off the graphics on their browser or if they are on a slow connection. The last part to fill out is Status Bar Message. This text will be seen in the Status bar of some browsers. Repeat this for each button in the document.

To make the button change when the mouse moves over it, you need to use a combination of the Web Content and Layers palettes (Fig. 6). In the Web Content palette, select a slice and click the Create Rollover State button at the bottom (it looks like a document). By default this state is called Over. This will be what the button looks like when the mouse moves over the button. You can now make changes to the Layer Styles in the Layers palette; you can also alter which layers are visible and even vary their opacity. For this button's Over State I just added a simple Color Overlay layer style to give the button a lit up appearance.

Click the Create Rollover State button again to add a Down State. For this Down State, what the button looks like when the mouse button is depressed, I changed the direction of the Bevel and Emboss layer style I already used to down instead of up. ImageReady remembers the differences between the layer properties for each of the different states. Again, repeat these steps for each button. If you need to change things in the normal state, click Normal at the top of the Web Content palette.

Each part of the image now needs to be saved in a web compatible format like GIF or JPG. To determine the specifics for each portion of the image, you can use the Optimize palette. For this example, I selected JPEG Medium from the Preset pop-up, but you can adjust the setting to your taste. You can mix and match file formats for different sections of an image depending on if one will give you a smaller file or if you need a special feature of one format like animation in a GIF.

If you want to preview your file as a web page, you can click the Preview in Browser button at the bottom of the Tools palette (it will have your default web browser's icon). Or you can select your favorite browser from the list under File > Preview In. Once you are satisfied with the page, select File > Save Optimized As. Choose Format: HTML and Images, Settings: Default Settings and Slices: All Slices and click Save.

You can now open the HTML page in any browser. The buttons change when the mouse moves over or clicks them and the links will work. To put the files on your web site, use your favorite FTP program. If you are already using Adobe Photoshop, this technique leverages knowledge you already have and makes Photoshop and ImageReady an indispensable part of your web creation toolbox. Remember, your ISP gives you free web space, but it's only free if you use it.



Windows Accessories "System Tools" Resource Meter, System Monitor

Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

Ron is a member of Space Coast PC Users Group. Instructions in this column were created on a Windows 98 system. e-mail him at <ringram728@earthlink.net>

The final three items under System Tools are: Net Watcher, Resource Meter, and System Monitor. As I said last month, Net Watcher is mainly useful for system administrators and won't be covered here. Clicking on Resource Meter will open the box in figure 1.

While the statement regarding this tool also using system resources is technically correct, in my experience it only changes the available resources percentage very slightly, perhaps 1-3%.

Why do we care about System Resources? The subject has been covered in detail in past issues, but essentially our concern is with severely reduced resources.

System resources are areas of memory that are used by the input manager (USER.EXE) and the graphic display interface manager (GDI.EXE) for keeping track of all of the windows that are open in a session and for drawing objects on the screen. Owing to their fundamental nature, the performance of these programs has been improved by limiting their data to a single 64Kb segment of DOS memory (the Intel processors can access data from a 64Kb segment much faster than from a wider area). If either of these segments becomes full, programs may fail to load and Windows may become unstable - regardless of how much other free memory there is. You may have 512 MB of RAM, but that has no bearing in this instance. For more detail on the subject, check out the following website: <http://www.windows-help.net/techfiles/winresources.html>.

When you click on the Resource Meter icon in System Tools, it will place a small image in the System Tray, similar to that in the box to the left with the green and red bars. If you hover your cursor over the image, the percentages of remaining resources will appear, figure 2.

The System percentage will be the same as the lower of the other two figures. When I first start the computer, the figures will be much closer to 90%, unless I have too many programs running at Startup. If you click on the icon in the Systray, the image in figure 3 will appear.

Fred Langa ran some extensive tests on some very basic computers a few years ago. He found that he could continue to open programs for multi-tasking until his System Resources fell to as little as 10% remaining and it still functioned. I've heard of others who couldn't open new programs when they still had 50% remaining. The significant things here is that is you get a message telling you that a program cannot open because there is insufficient memory, it is referring to System Resources, not RAM.

As you open programs a portion of the 64Kb will be taken up by the software and graphics. When you close the program, that memory should be returned to System Resources. Unfortunately, a lot of software, including some Microsoft programs, thru poor programming will not properly release the resources. If it happens often enough, your only option is to reboot.



Figure 1

Now let's take a look at the System Monitor. You can think of Windows 98's System Monitor as your PC's dashboard. Like the one in your car, it gives you an instant status report on your machine, and it will let you know when trouble is brewing under your PC's hood.



Figure 2

The System Monitor's real-time graphs provide a snapshot of key performance statistics. You can watch your system adjust its memory, CPU, and other settings in real time, which is great for optimizing or troubleshooting a PC. You'll find System Monitor under Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools. If you don't see it there, install it from the Add/Remove Programs applet in Control Panel. Simply select the Windows Setup tab and click System Tools.

Once System Monitor is running, you need to determine the best way to display your chosen statistics. To add a statistic to the System Monitor screen, open the Edit menu, select Add Item, and pick a statistic from one of the seven categories shown in figure 4.

Each category will offer a number of items from which to choose. Before adding items to view, however, you'll want to set up the System Monitor display. Keep System Monitor's statistics visible while you work so you get to know what's normal for your PC and your work habits. The easiest way to do that is to run System Monitor in a small, easy-to-read window that is unlikely to interfere with other computing tasks. To get your System Monitor window to look like the one shown at top right, open the System Monitor's View menu and check the Numeric Charts setting. Line and bar charts are colorful and fun to look at, but a numeric chart is more precise and easier to read. Also check the Always on Top and Hide Title Bar settings.

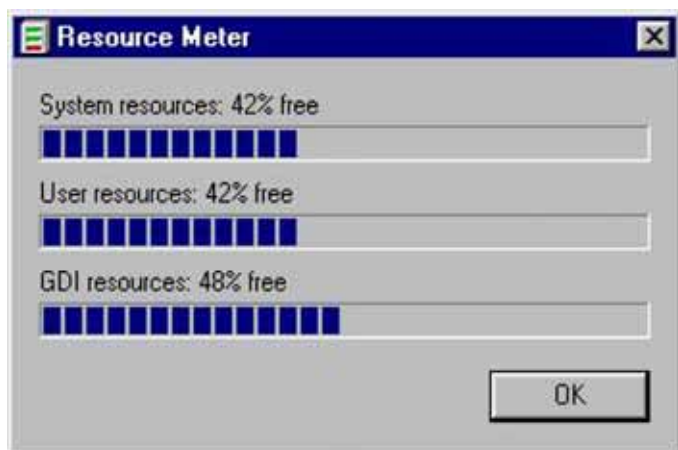


Figure 3

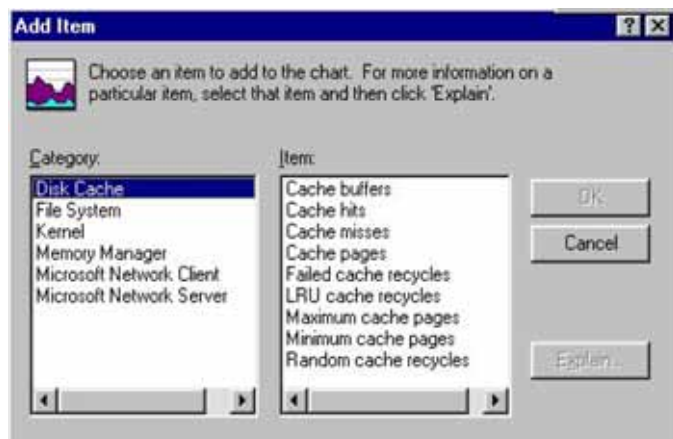


Figure 4

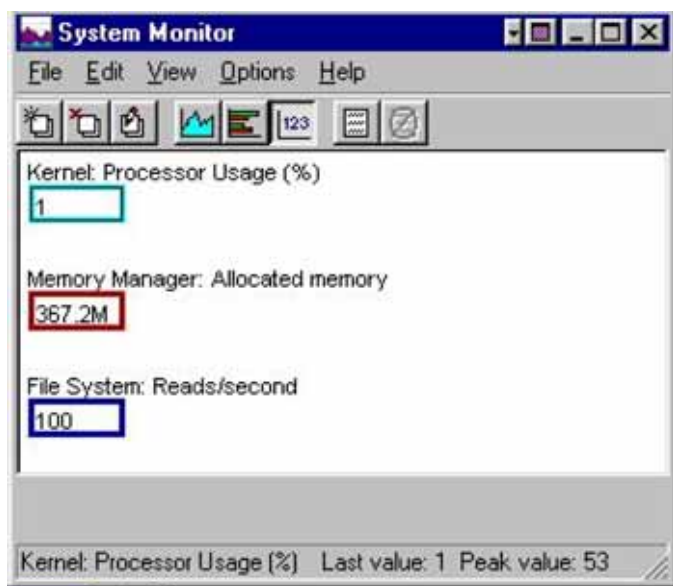


Figure 5

Finally, resize the System Monitor window as desired, and place it on the edge of your screen where it's out of the way, figure 5. You can make it quite small if you're willing to forgo identification labels and to use color to identify each statistic's box. Far more statistics are available for viewing than you would ever want to put on a single screen. Most of them are too technical for the average user. (Alas, the explanations offered by the Explain button on the Add Item screen are a joke.) But a handful of statistics are useful to just about every PC user.

Kernel: Processor Usage (%). This is an excellent indicator of your PC's overall computing burden. If your CPU usage consistently runs at over 75 percent, you're over-taxing your PC. The underlying cause may be insufficient memory, too many programs running at once, or a corrupt program that won't release the CPU. In some cases adding memory will fix the problem. In others you need to get a more powerful system.

Memory Manager: Unused physical memory. As you'd expect, this is the amount of physical RAM that's still free for use. You may be surprised at how little RAM remains available under Windows, even when only a few applications are running. This is because Windows constantly moves data in and out of the swap file on the hard disk. The 'Unused physical memory' setting is most useful when viewed in conjunction with the following six memory statistics File System. In this case it shows reads per second. You need to experiment to determine what data display is most useful for you. Just give it a try.

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Ponderings

Meredith Poor

The most complex project most people will undertake in their lifetimes is a remodeling job, something to replace the roach-infested wallboard with wood-panel plywood or somesuch. Anyone redoing a kitchen or bathroom becomes immediately familiar with various Murphy's: If anything can go wrong it will, things take longer than you think, not to mention cost more, and so forth.

The March Ponderings explored the City of San Antonio's bungled up ERP migration and various inherent limitations in the econ-political realm that more or less assures something resembling failure. For something to be written off this cavalierly one should be able to describe a pathway to success, since obviously if all computer projects fail then we wouldn't have computers. Since I have done a number of computer projects for businesses that are still in existence and prospering, I might be qualified to describe qualities that make a project successful. Caveat emptor: never make the mistake of believing the writer is your friend.

Successful computer projects are typically components of something else: the software that runs an oil refinery depends on the existence of a functional oil refinery. One of the lessons dot.commers learned was that to sell over the Internet one needed mundane things like warehouses, inventory, shipping departments, and customer service. All these things flowed from the vision of an entrepreneur, someone that was willing to cajole, inspire, threaten, and persuade future and present vendors, employees, investors, and customers. Any software project is therefore a gleam in the eye of someone with a penchant for synthesis.

Typically this fearless leader believes that computers are cheap and people are expensive. One august institution that subscribes to this theory is the US Department of Defense, which will spend billions on cruise missiles, smart bombs, and night vision systems if this keeps soldiers out of harms way. One interesting feature of many government agencies, however, is that employed bodies vote for incumbents, therefore the more employed bodies the better, regardless of efficiency. This mind-set, by itself, will frustrate any number of good ideas, computational or otherwise.

Once vision has been established and certain other assumptions gain currency, the next idea is that projects develop organically. One does not, by this thinking, 'buy' a custom-developed Enterprise Resource Planning system. What one does is look at one or more 'sore points', areas where efficiency is particularly substandard, and automate those. These systems are then 'plugged into' other systems via data-exchange protocols. As one learns how these systems increase efficiency or effectiveness, one piles in other modules (sometimes in other departments) to feed off of these.

In such situations projects are managed more like bathroom remodeling and less like new building construction. The people responsible for effectiveness oversight are low in the organization, perhaps people that will use the system day in and day out. Often what they want is what they can't get from their neighboring departments: tax collection information, pending parking tickets, a history of code violations, etc. In short, city employees often need what citizens at large would like to know, which is: 'what is that creep down the street up to now?'

Such systems tend to live on machines that are state of the art today, rather than when the contract was let two years ago.

Budgeting is segmented into hardware, COTS (commercial off-the-shelf) software, and custom development. The system architect(s) is/are keeping track of the big picture, but they are not developing for every department at once. The police department might get two years of solid work to sort out accident reports before further effort is spent on parks and recreation.

Assistant City Managers and Department heads tend to spend a lot of time in public interface, to the point where they're ability to monitor the development of computer applications is fatally compromised. This work has to be done by people that aren't being called repeatedly by TV stations trying to figure out when a particularly noxious drug den is due to be demolished.

'People' persons are unlikely to have much interest in computers, but more to the point they have little patience with accounting systems, financial controls, budgets, and fiscal periods. Such things are tolerated just enough to get on with the real job, however one perceives that. Furthermore, such individuals are more likely to reward loyalty than they are performance. This suggests that an outsider (i.e., a contractor) needs to be the provider of development services. How such contractors are selected raises an interesting question: do such people have to kowtow to political ideologies to get the ear of their patrons, and if so, doesn't this pretty much defeat the idea of someone coming in to implement real changes?

The laboratory for innovation, then, comes out of smaller governmental units. Smaller cities have shorter chains of command, and a greater ratio of the community knows the elected leadership. Ideas have a shorter path to follow to get from concept to implementation. Generally cost constraints are greater, so civil service employees aren't feeling like they're the target of a reduction in force. One might figure out whether a system 'succeeds' or 'fails' in one election cycle.

San Antonio might find solutions to at least some of it's computing problems by looking 'next door', whether that's Alamo Heights or Poteet or New Braunfels. It's like most ball clubs, one needs minor league teams to develop players. The 'players' in this context are software development companies that build systems that take care of municipal business.

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If Moving Can't Be Fun, At Least Make It Painless

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

It's said that "two moves equals one fire" in terms of inconvenience and turmoil. Fire victims might disagree, but there's no doubt that moves range from disruptive to agonizing. Having just moved -- and, in the process, reengineered my family's computing and Internet setup -- I'll share tips for recreating or transforming technology when moving.

Some aspects of moving are the same whether the trip is cross-country or down the street: packing boxes, dealing with new quarters, etc. But moving locally allows shuttling between old and new sites, avoiding the long-distance "D-Day" moment when everything must be in transit.

I'll focus on technology: computers, Internet issues (ISP/cable/DSL), system backup, telephone (local, long distance, cellular), and electricity. (Just ensure that someone attends to non-tech services such as gas and newspaper delivery!) And remember, just as insurance needs differ, no single move strategy fits everyone. Decide what to do based on your technical skills and how you'll be affected by problems.

It shouldn't be hard to identify what you've got -- computers, accessories, network connections, etc. But listing local dependencies may be challenging. What do you depend on locally? Just as you know your doctor and plumber -- what's your technology support structure? If you use a local ISP (Internet service provider), will it be available after you move? If you rely on neighbors or local user group for technical assistance, who will replace them? Remember that AARP's technical community at <http://community.aarp.org/rp-computers/start> is always as near as your Web browser!

Make and update to-do lists; take notes on conversations with vendors to track progress and follow up when (all too often) necessary.

First, inventory your technology and set goals. Balance recreating your current setup against improving it. The first choice reduces change and perhaps stress; the second can offer better computing.

Next, identify what you need. If you generally keep a list -- mental or written -- of technology problems (slow computer, fuzzy monitor, pokey Internet connection), moving may be the time to solve them.

Finally -- and most fun -- think about what you want. If you're moving when retiring, you may take up new hobbies. Dealing with music, digital photography, and movies all require more computer power: CPU speed, RAM, and hard drive space. And losing access to the office computer and network can suddenly make an upgrade essential.

Plan your new place's technology; decide where to place your computer(s). Custom space and furniture are nice but not essential. Make sure there are enough electrical outlets and that circuits can handle the load. Locate other connections you'll need such as telephone and cable (TV/Internet). Draw a floorplan and experiment with placing

furniture and equipment -- it's much easier to redraw lines than move heavy objects.

When your move is set, deal with utilities at both ends. You may not care when service is terminated, but there's sometimes a wait to establish telephone and cable service. For local moves I've had good results from visiting utility offices rather than making changes by phone: I could look at current products/services literature, discuss options, and read contracts. Consider new service plans -- for

cable TV, ISP, cell phone, long-distance calling. Your post-move needs may be different and plans have likely evolved since you last evaluated them.

My wife thinks -- likely correctly -- that my first priority after moving is getting online. Even if you've arranged broadband service, there may be problems: wiring or account setup may not be done; your PC configuration may not match the new service; etc. If access is essential, establish and test backup dial-access service before moving -- even if it requires a long-distance phone call.

Keep essential materials such as manuals and software install disks handy. Locate a user group where you're going, perhaps join before moving and introduce yourself to group leaders so you have a welcoming committee ready. Solicit recommendations for consultants or service shops, just in case.

If movers will handle your equipment or you're shipping it, make sure it's adequately insured.

If staying in touch is essential, warn people that you're moving and that you'll be offline and explain how you can be reached (cell phone, new address, etc.). Auto-responders (sending a canned message to people who e-mail you) can be helpful but should be used with caution so they don't respond inappropriately (e.g., to mailing lists to which you're subscribed).

If you're moving locally, set aside fragile equipment or anything you want to keep in sight, such as financial or medical records, and shuttle it to your new place.

For longer moves, allow extra time to pack electronics carefully in original boxes. (Now you know why you keep boxes!) Consider carrying or shipping boxes containing irreplaceable material (one data backup, software CDs, etc.)

Label cables when you disassemble your PC and network and record where they connect. If you're nervous about disassembling your equipment, a local consultant can likely prepare it for shipping. That's better than having movers do it! For extra protection, remove your hard drive and pack it in soft clothing you'll take with you. That will doubly protect you: from damage if the computer is dropped or banged, from losing data if the computer is lost or stolen.

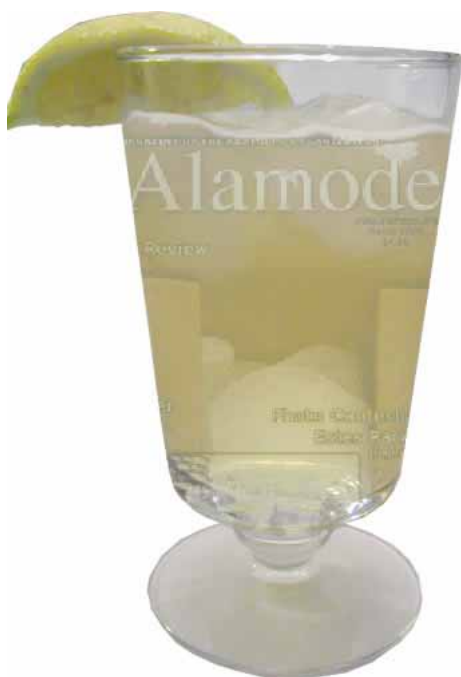
Carry a tested backup (software and data) separate from your PC. If you have desktop and laptop computers, you may be able to back the desktop system up on the laptop hard drive.

Once you arrive, even if you're in a hurry, don't neglect power protection -- using at least a surge protector, preferably a UPS (uninterruptible power supply).

Update anything displaying your address such as Web pages and email signature files. Tell tech-involved organizations such as your ISPs and domain name registrars that you've moved so you receive bills and notices. Now kick back and relax; enjoy your well-organized technology.

This article appeared originally on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>.

Internet Issue



The first article I wrote for the PC Alamode was about the Internet. I had to take it on a floppy disk to the editor's house, as there was no way to transmit files electronically. Now, almost 10 years later, the magazine itself is being published on the Web. What a long, strange trip it's been!

The main advantage to a digital magazine is that it's cheaper: Alamo PC is saving about \$3,000 a month in printing, labeling and postage costs. This was the driving factor: almost 80 percent of Alamo PC's income was being spent on the magazine and this was no longer tenable. It was a difficult and contentious decision. Handed a lemon, we decided to make lemonade.

We're still figuring out how to implement the features of the online format. Joseph Deleon, our editor, didn't waste any time figuring out that he now has about 10 more days to put the magazine to bed and that if there is a typo, it can be corrected – even a month after publication!

We've started adding color to every page, and should soon be incorporating live links to Internet sites. We're just beginning to discover the power of the PDF format: collaborative proofreading, indexing, flexibility in the number of pages, and more.

We're also discovering some challenges. The three-column format, for example, looks great on the printed page but when you try to read it on a screen it means you have to scroll up and down and up and down and up and down on every page. Joseph is working on a new design that will be attractive and functional both on screen and on paper.

The real work in putting the magazine online happened behind the scenes, though. Making sure we had enough server space. Integrating the membership database with the Web site. Training the Learning Center staff to answer questions. Writing clear instructions and developing classes. All of this was accomplished in about three weeks.

If you've gotten this far, congratulations. Pour yourself a cool glass of lemonade Alamode and enjoy reading about the Internet.

Susan Ives, PC Alamode Internet editor

"To pay or not to pay?"

That is the question for antivirus programs

By **Bill Hudson**, Seniorcomp instructor

Protecting your computer from malicious software like a virus is a huge subject, often very technical, and constantly changing, but absolutely vital to regular computer users. Students in our Seniorcomp courses regularly ask questions about computer viruses, Trojan horse programs and other related subjects. Commonly, the seniors simply want to know which antivirus program is best – how can they get the best protection for the least cost?

This article will explore the subject of free antivirus solutions. Where can you get them? Are they worthwhile or is this a case of getting what you pay for?

Let me start with a conclusion: you can get good antivirus protection at no cost! Now let's see if I can prove that statement. First, while the focus of this article is on free software for your PC, I will briefly mention antivirus Web sites. There are a number of sites that act like "portals" or clearing houses of information about antivirus solutions, including no cost solutions. These include links to sites that will scan your computer to identify viruses, and may even remove the viruses that are found. Some of my favorites are:

<http://www.freebyte.com/antivirus/>: Freebyte.com has free anti-virus software, free firewalls, free email protection software, free virus prevention software, tests of anti-virus programs, links to specialized anti-virus sites, information about virus prevention, useful evaluation versions of anti-virus software, etc.

http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Software/Anti_virus_freeware/: The Free Site provides a good list of programs that will either clean and/or scan your computer for viruses.

<http://www.nonags.com/nonags/antivirus.html>: Nonags provides links to free software "that has no disabled features, nags, time limits, or any other tricks."

Now, as the Web sites noted above will show, there are a number of free antivirus options available. The Freebyte site provides a good list:

Antidote Super Lite version Freeware lite version of the commercial Antidote program. It utilizes the same virus database as the commercial version.

Antivir Free anti-virus software for Windows. Detects and removes more than 50,000 viruses. Free support.

Avast! Anti-virus program for Windows 9x/Me, NT/2000/XP. The home edition is free for noncommercial users.

AVG Free edition Free anti-virus program for Windows.

FProt Free anti-virus software for Linux, FreeBSD and DOS (personal use). Evaluation version for Windows.

HandyBits Free for personal use. Virus 'scanner integrator'. After performing an auto-search for installed virus scanners, it will scan your files using all found installed virus scanners. This can be useful, since some antiviral programs are good for one type of viruses, other programs for other viruses.

HouseCall Free anti-virus software. Runs from the Web site in your Web browser (Netscape 3.01 or higher, Explorer 3.0 or

higher) while scanning your drive(s), so you need to go to this site and activate the scan.

Panda Active Scan Our free tool for detecting and eliminating viruses from your computer. Installs as an ActiveX control in your Web browser (only works with Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher). Again, you need to go to the site for the scan.

PC Pitstop A large number of online computer and Internet related tests, including a virus scan and spyware test. The free virus scanner installs itself as an ActiveX control inside your Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher, so you need to visit the site to get the scan.

Symantec Security Check A number of online tests (run in your Web browser), including a virus scan. Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher required.

VCatch Free virus scanner for Windows, including email protection and protection while browsing the Web.

Focusing on software for your PC, C/NET gives its highest ratings to Avast, AVG and Antivir as the best free antivirus programs. These programs all install and scan constantly, including your email, and they automatically update their virus definitions.



AVG provides comprehensive anti-virus protection for personal computers. The unique combination of detection methods (heuristic analysis, generic detection, scanning and integrity checking) ensures that your computer receives the maximum protection possible on multiple levels (Resident Shield, Email Scanner plugins, Personal Email Scanner, On-Demand and other tests, etc.). AVG takes about 9 Mb of Ram.

Avast! Home Edition is antivirus software for home noncommercial use. It scans for viruses, worms and Trojans. Avast! scans on demand--with skinnable simple interface, during boot time and on access. It protects e-mail, ICQ, mIRC, Kazaa. It maintains Virus Chest. True incremental updates based on iAVS technology update virus definition at least twice a week. Avast! Now, features added intrusion detection, transparent email (SMTP/POP3/IMAP4) scanner, support for new P2P and IM programs, and adds new languages. Avast takes about 16 Mb of Ram, so it uses a bit more of your resources than AVG and, reportedly, it may be less effective for Windows XP.

AntiVir detects and removes more than 80,000 viruses, is always among the winners of comparison test featured in computer journals, and the resident Virus Guard serves to monitor file movements automatically (e.g. downloading of data from the internet). It features scanning and repair of macro viruses, protection against previously unknown macro viruses, safeguard against cost generating dial-up program protection against Trojans, worms, backdoors, jokes and other harmful programs, and easy operation. It has an Internet-Update Wizard for easy updating, and protection against previously unknown boot record viruses and master boot record viruses.

I use Avast on my Windows 2000 laptop and have for some months now, ever since my subscription to McAfee ran out. I have been pleased with performance, support and apparent effectiveness. Bottom line, I think AVG and Avast are the best bets for good, free antivirus protection. For Windows XP folks, I think I'd go with AVG.

Bill Hudson is the founder of Alamo PC's SeniorComp.

Searching: Easy as Pie

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

A friend of mine – a very intelligent friend, I might add – asked me for help in searching. I've had her e-mail address for years and years, so I know she's been using the Internet for a long time.

"What are you having trouble finding?" I asked, anticipating a complicated request.

"Everything," she replied. "I don't even know where to start."

Sometimes, I suspect, we make computer stuff sound a lot harder than it really is. We write 5,000-word articles about the best search strategies that throw around terms like "Boolean" and "parameter." There's a whole shelf in the bookstore about the intricacies of searching the Internet. It freaks people out.

That was her problem. She thought it was hard.

Searching is easy.

Step one: Go to <www.google.com>

Step two: Type whatever you are searching for in the box and press Enter

Step three: Wade through the results until you find the answer to your question

Not sophisticated, but it works 90 percent of the time.

Back to my friend. What was she looking for? A recipe for strawberry-rhubarb pie.

"Just type it in," I told her.

"Type what in?" she asked.

"Just what you told me: 'I want a recipe for strawberry-rhubarb pie.'"

She wasn't too sure how to spell rhubarb. Don't worry about it. Is strawberry-rhubarb hyphenated? Don't worry about it. Do I capitalize strawberry? Don't worry about it.

She got rhubarb right but spelled recipe wrong the first time. Google came back: do you mean recipe? Yes. Click on that. We found that we got different results for:

recipe for strawberry rhubarb pie

recipe for strawberry-rhubarb pie

I want a recipe for strawberry rhubarb pie

I need a recipe for strawberry rhubarb pie

But guess what? We got recipes for strawberry-rhubarb pie out the wazoo.

There's an old joke: Why do you always find a missing item in the last place that you look? Because when you find it, you stop looking. Duh.

Most of the times we are searching for simple information, like a pie recipe, or the date the United States entered World War I or how many angels can dance on the head of a pin or the dif-

ference between cherubim and seraphim. Once you find the answer you can stop looking.

Professional researchers may have different needs but if all you want is an answer to a question, just ask the question. Odds are, you'll get the answer. Then you can stop looking.

Two tiny refinements.

If you want to buy something, or are just comparing prices, look in Froogle rather than Google. You can click the Froogle button after you've searched for something on Google. Froogle (a play on the word frugal) limits itself to stuff for sale.

If you are looking for a phrase - your name, the title of a book, a quotation - put quotation marks around it. Google will look for the exact phrase. "Susan Ives" will only find Susan Ives, not Susan Sarandon and Burl Ives. It makes the results more manageable.

That's it. Try searching. You can't break anything and it's as easy as pie.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.



eBay Dropoff Stores

By William Hudson, Alamo PC

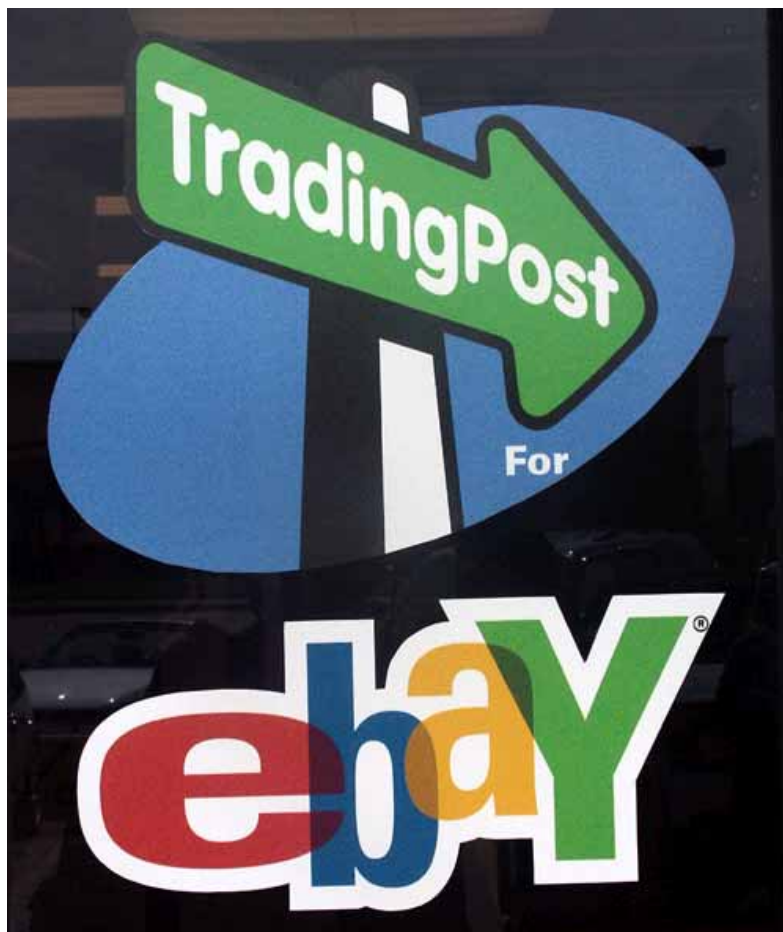
Over the past several years, it seems as though eBay drop-off stores have been popping up as fast as those Seattle coffee franchises. Judging by this crop of outlets, real opportunities are obviously seen in the

untapped numbers of people who want to jump on the eBay bandwagon but who wouldn't mind someone else doing the selling for them. What are these outfits and are they a good deal?

eBay drop-off stores (usually "bricks and mortar" establishments) accept merchandise from potential sellers, take the photographs and list the item on the eBay site. After the item sells, hopefully for a vast profit, they collect the funds from the high bidder and ship the goods. Lastly, they hand over the sale price to the seller, less costs and rather hefty commissions. The total cost to the seller is about 40% of the realized price. It is also worth noting that some drop-off stores impose a minimum estimated value and a maximum weight on the items they are willing to accept for listing.

Reports suggest that successful stores might serve around 30 customers per week with each customer bringing in between 1 and 10 items to be listed. The average selling price is in the \$75 - \$100 range. It is a labor-intensive business, over 20 minutes being needed to research, describe, photograph and list one item on eBay. And that is exclusive of the amount of time spent packing, shipping and answering emails about the items.

Jimmy Day and his partners are familiar with eBay both as a seller and a buyer, and that background has come in handy since they bought the "iSold It"



rights to the San Antonio, Houston and Dallas/Ft. Worth metro areas in 2004. Providing excellent customer service is key for them; they hope their first locations in San Antonio are a precursor to future success, they have several more in development and a commitment to opening and owning a minimum of 45 locations.

Whether drop-off stores are a good deal for you as a seller, is no different than mowing your lawn or fixing that leaky tap. How much of your time do you want to commit to selling the item yourself versus paying somebody else to do it? The stores also argue that they may be able to get a higher final selling price than their customers, thanks to better photography, descriptions, research, and their eBay reputation. That argument might be true but clearly is not the case if the seller is willing to get up the eBay learning curve and put in the time and effort required to produce a quality listing themselves.

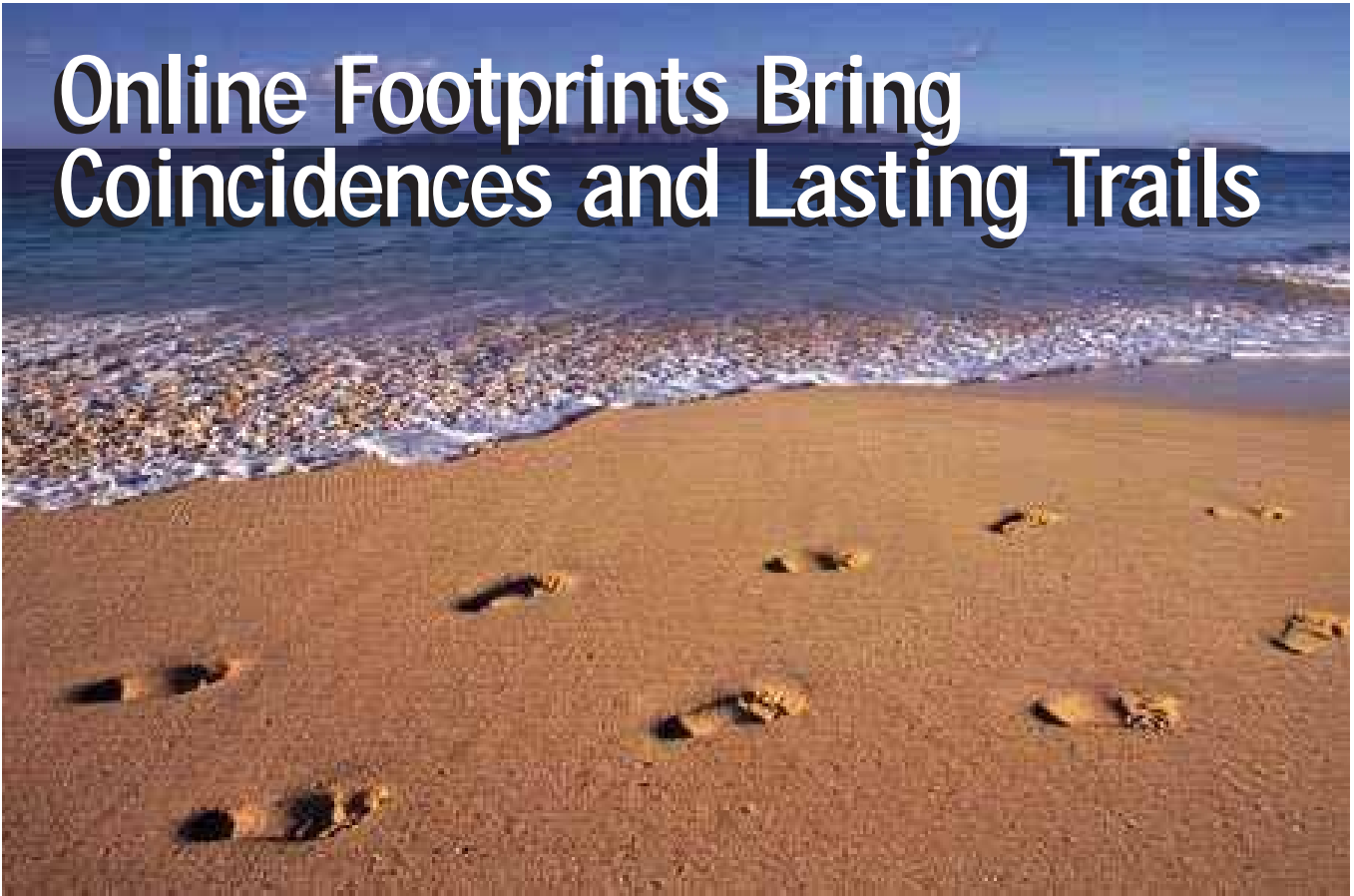
There are several options in the San Antonio area. The leading outlets are the "iSold It" franchises (www.i-soldit.com). They have a couple of locations open already and each seems to be very professionally organized. They apply a \$30 minimum estimated value and 150 pound weight limit on consigned items. The fees range from 13% to 33% plus eBay fees plus payment fees. AuctionDrop (www.auctiondrop.com) has an alliance with the UPS retail outlets. Fees range from 20% to 38% plus eBay fees plus payment fees. However, the UPS store I visited had no first-hand experience of AuctionDrop whatsoever, so I wonder how successful their alliance is proving to be. There is also at least one ePowerSeller that has opened shop. The one I visited seemed very quiet and rather casual though the fees (30% total across the board) seem reasonable. AuctionBin (www.auctionbin.com) is operating in the Austin area but has not yet reached San Antonio.

Incidentally, do not confuse the expression "Drop-Off" with "Drop Shipping" which is a totally different animal. With the latter, eBay sellers working with their own computer find a supplier that carries the products they want to sell on their own website. The supplier offers access to all of their products at wholesale prices. They will keep all the products at their warehouse until the Internet seller finds a customer. You would probably not believe how many times you are actually buying from sellers who actually own no inventory! But that's another story.

The staff at the ISoldIt! store at 11650 Bandera Rd (just inside loop 1604 next to HEB) will photograph, pack, ship and write descriptions for all your merchandise. All you have to do is cash the check. ISoldIt! also has stores at 13433 Highway 281(at Bitters) and 8332 Agora Pkwy in Selma.



Online Footprints Bring Coincidences and Lasting Trails



Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor for Region 2, and columnist for the AARP Computers and Technology Website

A song written by Peter Mayer <www.blueboat.net>, a great singer I've just discovered, is titled "Earth Town Square". Describing how technology and travel have shrunk the world, Peter lyrically observes "Now it's feeling like a small town, with six billion people downtown, at a little sidewalk fair, in Earth Town Square". Even though all six billion of us aren't (yet!) online, the Internet as a meeting place is certainly one of the engines making the Earth seem smaller. While it was once exotic -- or alarming -- to have a long distance telephone conversation, chatting electronically with people half a world away doesn't raise my pulse.

A decade ago, early in my use of the Internet, I was astonished by its ability to create coincidences -- true story! I was consulting for an online service that gave me an email address used only for their work. I received a note at that address with the intriguing subject, "I am you", from another Gabriel Goldberg. (Nowadays, that's the sort of spoofed email I'd likely delete without reading.) He'd checked his entry in the service's directory and found my entry next to his. We exchanged pleasantries, described ourselves, shared wonder at having found each other; he mentioned that he was a music student in Boston.

Later that week, I received another note at my regular email address, from a woman who said that she'd known a Gabe Goldberg years earlier, the last she'd heard from him he was going to Boston to study music, and was I that person. I replied to her, copying the other Gabe, that either they were playing a joke on me or we had a mighty powerful coincidence.

Truth is stranger than joke: they were former high school sweethearts who had drifted apart. In the same week they both found my name and two different email addresses, and for very different reasons, they contacted me. I later heard from her mother, who thanked me for reuniting them! And, remarking on the coincidence of names, the other

Gabe wondered, "How guys named Jim Smith handle all the coincidences".

Participating in mailing lists, newsgroups, and Web sites leaves online footprints and makes us visible. The bad news is that's one of the ways spammers find targets, but the good news is that being visible makes it easier for lost friends to track us down. Soon after 9/11 I heard a voice on the phone I hadn't heard for nearly 30 years: my college girlfriend. She'd searched Google (often called "Googling") for me, found me, and called. We've stayed in touch since, have gotten together several times, and have shared news of our respective families. And just recently I used Google to contact an elementary school friend after hearing of her taking a new job in San Francisco.

A friend, Ross Patterson, reports another name collision. Having been online since the 1970s, he never used an alias, has always used his own name for email and his Web site. Everything was fine for about four years, but in 2002, a comedic film called "The New Guy" <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0241760>> came out. He notes that it was a

critical success, if you count one to one and a half stars a success. A co-starring role was played by (a different) Ross Patterson <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0666388>>. A few months later he started to receive emails from young women through his Web site email address. Most assumed he was "that Ross Patterson", although some asked outright. Most said that he was "kewl" and "soooooooo HOT!!!!", and often asked for

autographs. Being the father of a teenage girl, he wrote back politely to each young lady explaining that he wasn't the fellow they were looking for, and deleted their correspondence. Several responded, all nicely, and he traded a few friendly notes with one girl.

Another coincidence earned me a colleague, client, and friend. After forwarding a meeting notice to a local professional mailing list, I received an earnest note from someone I didn't know, saying that the topic of the meeting was outrageous and that

I should attend representing her and protest what was proposed for discussion. I'd normally simply delete such out-of-the-blue notes, but this one was so well-crafted and so earnest that I couldn't resist cautiously replying, asking whether she really meant to address me. Of course, she hadn't -- someone in her company had forwarded the note internally, she'd responded to me by mistake instead of her colleague. But we continued chatting, became friends, and she became a client. If I hadn't forwarded the note, we'd never have met.

Sometimes the Internet simply facilitates synchronicity, related events happening at the same time. A few years ago, two friends independently mentioned online that they had made a New Year's resolution to start new relationships. So I introduced them and arranged a blind date!

Amidst the fun of unanticipated connections and reestablished friendships, there's a cautionary note: online has a long memory. Web sites like Google cache (retain) Web pages even after they're deleted from their original Web locations. Postings to mailing lists, Web forums, newsgroups, and other online venues are usually retained indefinitely. It can be unnerving to discover that items posted in the heat of the moment or as youthful indiscretions can be retrieved years later by potential employers or new acquaintances -- or someone snooping for unpleasant reasons.

Just as it's worth checking your credit report periodically, it's a good idea to occasionally check what online trails you've left. My current favorite surfing tool is Google, so I search for "Gabe Goldberg" and "Gabriel Goldberg". (The quote marks bind the first and last names together so that only Web pages having the exact full name are found. I search on Gabe/Gabriel because I've used both names.) If your name is closer to Jim Smith's -- offering 56,000 hits rather than the more manageable 182 for my name -- you can tighten the search by adding terms such as a middle initial, state of residence, hobby, employer, etc. But don't make the search too narrow or you may miss genuine references.

It's tedious to erase tracks from an online history; it requires contacting each site that hosts material you'd like to delete, perhaps following instructions and filling out forms. Some mailing list sites refuse as a matter of policy to delete list postings, reasoning that doing so would distort a list's historical record. The government has made serious efforts to sanitize the Web by removing content deemed dangerous, such as plans for water/power system. But the Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org/index.html>) archives many years' of Web data. For example, the first image shown of www.whitehouse.gov is from December 1996. Even when successful, scrubbing data off Web sites often doesn't really make it unavailable, it just slows people finding it.

It's much better to avoid saying anything online that might return to haunt you, than try to clear the record after the fact.

This article appeared originally on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>. (c) AARP 2004.

Free Web-Based E-mail

By David Sonenschein, Alamo PC

Web-based email accounts are those that you can access with an Internet connection and browser from any computer; you do not need an email client, that is, a special program made to receive, send, and manage email such as Microsoft's Outlook, Qualcomm's Eudora, or Thunderbird, free from <www.Mozilla.org>. These programs have to be set by you to receive and send messages through a server that would usually belong to your Internet Service Provider (ISP). If you have an

ISP, you most likely have at least one free email account that comes with the service; some ISP's also allow web access to their mail services.

But you don't need to have an ISP or even your own computer, only access to a computer that has an Internet connection to get a web-based email account. There are many good web email services that are free, supported by advertising presented on your screen and added to your email.

Free web-based email accounts are good for being able to access personal and professional mail when traveling and away from your home computer, for use as a product registration address that helps channel spam away from your other accounts, and as a repository for messages from e-discussion groups. Some of these email providers also offer features for Instant Messaging, chat rooms and forums, music and photo galleries, and so on.

Over the last 12 months or so I tracked nearly 30 free web-based email services. I looked for stability and consistency of the site (some were bought out by others and some went out of business; see more later in this article on what to do if your provider disappears), and for the following features you should take into consideration according to your needs: megabytes of storage space, attachment limitations by megabyte size or number of files, a separate reply-to address, virus checking, spam filters and reporting, mail filters, spell checking (just seeing if you're awake...), search abilities, signatures, vacation or autoreply, ability to access a POP3 account, calendar and reminders, notepads, address nicknames, group or list addresses, print version of received mail, support offered, popups that occurred, ability to purchase expanded services, and other features. I've subjectively ranked the services as Highly Recommended, Recommended, Acceptable, and Questionable. If you have a favorite free web-based email service not mentioned here, let me know as I plan to reissue this review perhaps next year.

You can get to any of these I discuss by typing the URL in your browser's address bar, just as you would to get to any other website. As you explore ones that may interest you, read the provider's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy. It can be tedious, but look for agreements in which you accept programs downloaded by the service (spyware for example), how and with whom they may share your personal and/or demographic data, restrictions on content and conduct, and even limits to the number of accounts. Most require you to use the service (i.e., at least login) at least once every 30 days or they will delete your mail; most I've tested allowed the account to be reactivated but the new mail was refused and old mail gone after 30 days. I have 5 web-based email accounts I check daily, several I check once a week, and the rest once a month.

Once you select a service, you can shortcut to the site's homepage by using either your browser's memory in the address bar, or by placing a shortcut icon on your desktop. Several providers' home page is also a portal, offering links for searching and shopping, news and weather, and other information.

Recommended

FastMail <www.fastmail.fm> is an Australian service with extremely rich features and settings. Its free version offers 10mb storage, and extensive help; a reply to a query came in 4 hours. It's a delight for the technically intermediate or advanced user, but is also easy enough for the beginner and low level usage. Improvements are continually added and in development. Leaves no cookies or spyware. Highly Recommended for lists and communication.

MyWay <www.myway.com> serves as my home page and is a customizable portal or gateway page that provides all sorts of links to the Web. As with other providers, MyWay (associated with the search service AskJeeves) recently expanded its storage to 125mb. Its claim to fame is its absence of banner ads and popups, making the interface very clean and fast loading. Support is good with a query reply coming 2 days later, and many service and formatting features are offered. No data mining cookies. Highly Recommended for lists and communication.



Fastermail <www.fastermail.com> is a good, basic service with a quick loading clean interface. It offers 10mb storage, good support, and leaves only an identification cookie. Recommended for lists.

When you visit Hello Kitty (<www.hellokitty.com> or <www.sanriotown.com/login/index.php> you will find it so cute you'll just puke. Then you'll go blind from all the pink. After you recover, you'll see it's not a bad site with a number of useful features, merchandise, 10mb storage, forums, file sharing, games, several sources for support, and more. Leaves 1 ID cookie, can be slow sometimes, and opens the login and mail service in another window if you go to hellokitty.com so you have to close two windows. Recommended for lists and communication for youth and adults.

Sacbeemail <www.sacbeemail.com> is a service offered by the Sacramento Bee, a respected California newspaper, or at least respected as much as one can respect journalists. A very small amount of storage, 3mb, but a nice basic service, and there's a link to the newspaper's portal home page. Offers a 12 language spell checker. Leaves 1 ID cookie. Recommended for low traffic lists and communication.

SAFe-mail <www.safe-mail.net> offers an extensive variety of features and settings (including photos, document storage, newsletters, and more), and can offer business packages and domain service among its 5 levels of premium versions. You can choose an interface in English, Japanese, or Hebrew. The free version offers only 3mb storage, though a query reply (received in 1 day) says expansion is in development. The free version also offers the ability to send password protected mail, and encryption is available in other versions; thus only your designated receivers can open and read the mail. A rich package that doesn't leave cookies, but be sure you type ".net" instead of ".com". Recommended for communication and low traffic lists.

Tidni <www.tidni.com> moved from "Acceptable" to "Recommended" because of recent improvements to its service. Now offering 300mb of storage and most of the standard features, Tidni also has good support; a query reply came promptly. The site is largely a personals service but it has a very functional email element along with allowing photos, chat, music, and a web page. No cookies were left during testing. Recommended for lists and communication.

Acceptable

Cool Goose <www.coolgoose.com> has 10mb of storage but lacks many features of most other web email providers. It does, however, feature a home page of many links, and offers free auctions, music, and a web page. It has a clean look and nice feel, leaves only 1 ID cookie, and I just like the name. Support is quite good, with a query reply in 3 hours. Acceptable for low traffic lists and minimum communication.

Dellmail <www.dellmail.com> is of course associated with computer retailer Dell, Inc. It's a sometimes slow and sparse web email freebie with minimal functions. A few homepage links take you to Snap.com, a search engine, and Dell has long been (too) closely associated with Microsoft. There's always 1 annoying popup, DoubleClick tried to download twice, and AdAware found a data mining cookie. Support is OK, with a query reply (from Mail.com) 3 days later. Acceptable for low traffic lists and minimum communication.

Go.Com Mail <www.go.com> is a service of the Walt Disney Internet Group (includes ABC, ESPN, and more), offering a small 6mb storage. A basic package, it does offer email for

kids with parental settings, but you go through extensive signups. Support is fair, with a query reply in 4 days. It left several ID and tracking cookies. Acceptable for low traffic lists and minimum communication.

Mail2World <www.mail2world.com> has good storage (250mb) and a lot of features, including video email and translation ability. Support is OK, with query replies in 3 days and 6 days. Very functional, but slipped from "Recommended" to cautiously "Acceptable" because Spybot reported it tried to download FastClick and Avenue A tracking cookies 4 times, and pages often had an annoying popup. And they will delete your mail if not accessed within 30 days. Acceptable for lists and communication.

MailBlocks <www.mailblocks.com> is a solid but low storage (5mb) service (a query reply regarding expansion received 2 days later was unhelpful). Their spam defenses are a bit more sophisticated than most, and they offer 5 "trackers," disposable address that can be used for product registration and other limited or single use events. Cookies left are minimal, but the service was recently bought out by the on-line monster, AOL. Acceptable for communication.

Walla <www.walla.com> offers 1 gigabyte of storage but a rather basic set of email features. It does offer non-English language support. Support is only a FAQ, and this Israeli service disappointingly tried to download DoubleClick, left 1 tracking cookie according to AdAware SE, and 1 other cookie. Acceptable for lists and communication.

Yahoo <www.yahoo.com> is one of the biggies, its home page full of ads, links, ads, features, and ads. Recently expanded storage is now 250mb with many formatting and settings features with good help support including tutorials. Leaves 1 cookie, unfortunately tried many times to download tracking cookies like DoubleClick and Avenue A. Not good; be sure to configure Spybot to block these. Acceptable for lists and communication.

Questionable

Catholic.Org <www.catholic.org> may be the one for you if you're a conservative Catholic. Before the recent storage explosion, this service was exceptional with its 20mb and 8mb limit on attachments. Full featured for service and formatting, it also offers translations. Part of the COL (Catholic On Line) network, the home page is full of links to information, news, and all things Catholic. The service earned the lower "Questionable" rating because the FAQ help is small, but more seriously no reply was received to an email query. Upon signup, you are required to specify "Issues or Concerns" and you will receive a number of home-based emails asking for money or activism. Though there was only 1 ID cookie, there were many popups during my test sessions. Acceptable for communication but the number of COL emails would make list storage a chore.

Hotmail <www.hotmail.com> was one of the first and remains probably the most populous of the free web-based email providers. As such, subscribers are the target of every spammer in the world. They were very slow to develop spam protection and even with recent improvements one must spend time scanning the bulk mail folder and the regular inbox. The features are good and it now offers 250mb of storage; it has extensive help features and a query was answered in about a day and a half. Aside from spam, the risk to my machine was elevated by 2 attempts to download DoubleClick, and 16 (!) attempts to download Avenue A; there were 5 session cookies and 1 other data mining cookie deposited after my use.

Netscape offers web mail <www.netscape.com/webmail> but surprisingly this sometimes slow service, recently taken over by AOL, offers only a barebones set of features even though it has 250mb of storage. Support is only a FAQ. One tracking cookie and 4 others were left at my sessions, and I started getting spam from AOL at the other email address you have to provide when signing up.

GMail (still in a test mode so it was unavailable when I surveyed) got a lot of press, coming on as if it was the first to offer 1 gigabyte of storage. Actually, Spymac and Walla got there before Google. I'm very leery of Google and afraid the empire may go the way of Microsoft, that is, become more concerned about money than product and service. Further, there are significant concerns about privacy and censorship that limit my use of Google (see <www.google-watch.org> for good exposes of Google's political, commercial, and technical deceptions). By the way, I tracked Spymac <www.spymac.com> but cannot recommend it because of its confusing and buggy interface and lack of reply to queries.

But then I'm of the opinion that you really don't need one or more gigabytes of email storage. Even those in the 100-300mb range if near capacity become unmanageable without a good message search feature (which of course GMail would have). For any mail service, it pays to be a good housekeeper. At the very least, devise a system of folders in your mail reader in which to file messages. Better yet is to keep weeding out messages you won't need to refer to again (after saving any wanted return email address to your address book). Finally, save any messages down to your hard drive in appropriate folders as ascii text files for longer and more efficient storage. Personally, I've set a limit so that when my mailbox gets to 30% filled, I do some cleaning up. Also make sure all attachments you want saved are saved down in the format in places where you want them.

Changing

Sometimes services disappear; they're bought out by other companies, or the owner (usually individuals or small companies) does not have the time or money to continue providing a free service. Very understandable. The first thing I'd do once you get an account up and running is keep a backup of your address book. Depending on the service, you might be able to export it but most likely you'll have to just print out the screen under the address book. If you need to, keep a secure external account of all your email accounts, usernames, and passwords. Related to passwords, remember you can't change your username, but I recommend changing your password every 3-6 months.

If you've subscribed to a list, there will be instructions somewhere on how to change your subscription address, as well as how to hold messages and unsubscribe. If the provider at which you receive postings goes away, undelivered emails will be returned to the listserv administrator who will have to delete your subscription. Simply resubscribe from another account, just as you did when you signed up the first time.

And don't forget: (1) Have the free programs AdAware SE <www.lavasoftusa.co> Spybot <www.spybot.info/en/index.html>, and have an antivirus program or service installed, all continually updated. (2) Have a firewall in place. (3) Have a system checker and cleaner. (4) Set your browser to refuse third party cookies (For Internet Explorer, check Tools/Internet Options; for Mozilla, see Edit/Preferences). (5) More excellent tips are at <www.aresearchguide.com/14surviv.html>.

I manually delete all cookies daily that are not related to sites I regularly visit, keeping only what I call "ID [identification]

cookies." These cookies help the provider organize your home page or email account and, hopefully, do not collect and transmit information as do "DoubleClick," "Avenue A," and "Fastclick" which I mention in the reviews. These are tracking cookies, meaning they gather data about your surfing habits and often personal information that can include phone number, and so on. They are used to configure popup ads, another Internet annoyance. Delete these if not previously blocked immediately after visiting any site as they will continue to make registry changes and add files and directories to your computer (see <www.pestpatrol.com/pestinfo> for more on these and others).

As with any free service, if you benefit from it, it is good form to drop a note to the provider and their staff that you appreciate the service, especially that it's free. It will help maintain the longevity of such services, encourage competent administration and support, and give everyone a case of the warm fuzzies. If there are problems at a site, like everything else on the Net, work in good faith with those involved to solve the problem rather than rejoicing at finding a new audience for your potty-mouth. On the other hand, do not accept discourteous and unprofessional conduct. Do others and they will do you. Or something like that.

David Sonenschein (dsonen@myway.com) is a San Antonio independent researcher and writer. This piece originally appeared on the website for the National Coalition of Independent Scholars <www.ncis.org/web-based%20e-mail.htm> and has been adapted for use by PC Alamo.

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New Google Toolbar

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Last year at about this time I wrote about the new Google toolbar: you can still read that article online at <www.alamopc.org/pcalamode/features/F20040404.shtml>. To recap, the free toolbar sits at the top of your Web browser and adds functionality: easy searches and, best of all, a popup blocker. Since I installed my toolbar I've blocked 2,864 of those annoying popup windows.

You can see the toolbar at Figure 1. (google-3.gif)

The newest version of the toolbar adds three new features: a spellchecker, a word translator and autolinking.

Spellcheck checks the spelling on Web forms. Some people, like me, fill out a lot of forms. Some of you hardly ever do. If you an inveterate form-filler outer, you need this feature.

Figure 2 (google-1.gif) shows spellcheck in action. Fill out a form, then click on the spellcheck button on the Google toolbar. Misspelled words are highlighted. Click on a word and suggested changes appear in a drop-down menu. If the correct word isn't listed, you have the opportunity to change it manually.

It's not perfect: you can see that it did not pick up the lone letter "t", meant to be the word "to," nor did it realize that I used the wrong version of the word "aid." It's better than nothing, however, and can save you from embarrassment in Web-based e-mail, chat rooms, discussion and when filling out forms.

The word translator can translate English words into German, Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese, Chinese or Korean. It is intended for non-native English speakers who may come across the occasional word that is unfamiliar to them.

I set the language to German: to brush up on my vocabulary. You can see the results in figure 3. (google-4.gif) All you do is hover your mouse over the word and this translation pops up.

Autolinking can detect street addresses, book ISBNs, FedEx tracking numbers and automobile VINs. If one of these appears on a Web site, click on the autolink button on the Google toolbar and the program will create a temporary link. U.S. street addresses link to Google maps; books link to Amazon.com.

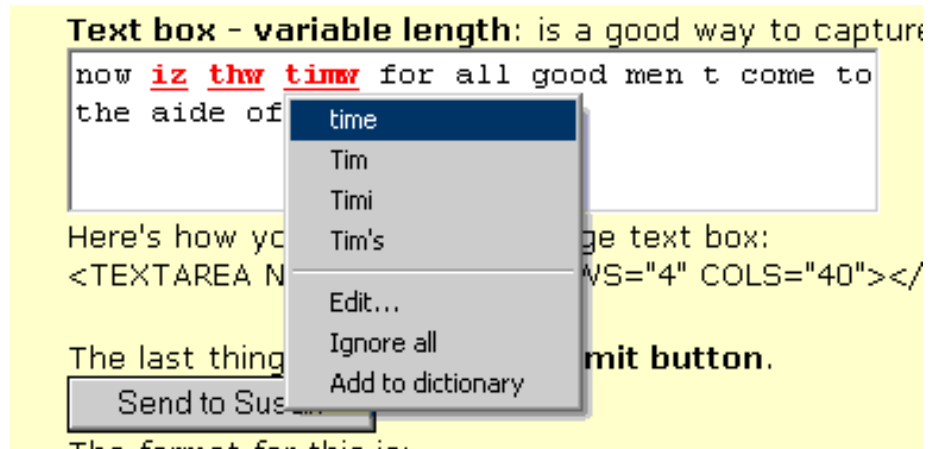


Figure 1



Figure 2

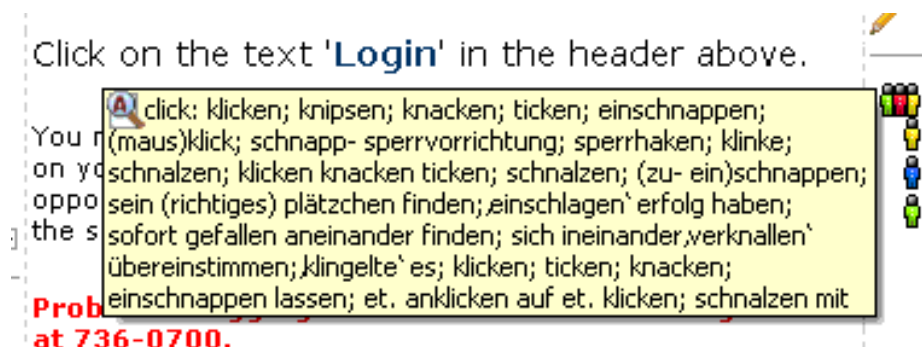


Figure 4

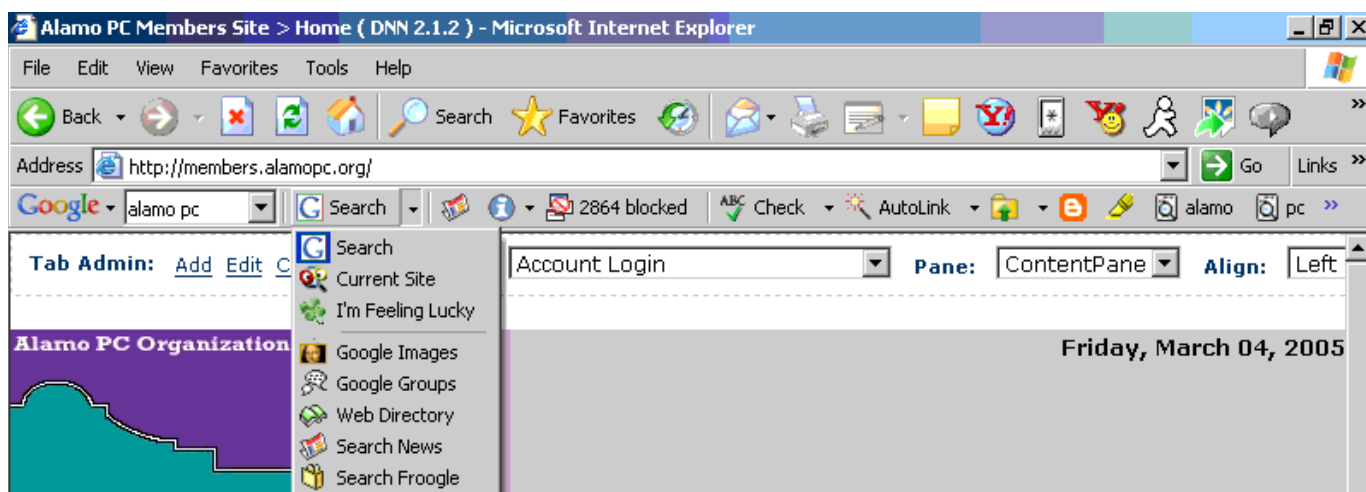


Figure 3

Figure 4 (google-2.gif) is an example of a book link: Google detected the ISBN number for the book and created a link to it on Amazon.com.

I found this feature to be erratic, especially with maps. I went to a dozen pages with addresses on them and Google only detected a couple of them. Google is aware of the problem and is working on it.

Some people think this is an evil feature: if the Web designer wanted a link to Google Maps, he or she would have put it there, by gum. It is handy, though, and saves you a couple of steps when you are looking for an address.

This is a nice set of tools. The spellchecker and autolink features remain dormant unless you activate them by clicking on a button, so they are unobtrusive. The translator is a little irritating, but if you need a little help with English and you are a native speaker of one of the supported languages it could be a life-saver. You can disable it – and any of the Google toolbar features -- if you don't need it.

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Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.

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ALAMO PC RESOURCE CENTER

San Antonio Area Computer Show

By Steven Tech, Jr., Alamo PC

On March 12 and 13, there was a Computer Show at the Live Oak Civic Center. Admission is \$5.00 and there is a door prize given away in the late afternoon. You must be present to win. That means, if you're not there, they draw and call out another name until a winner shows up. If you surf the web, go to the <http://pcshows.com/>, there you'll find the dates and times. Saturday: 10 A.M. to 5 P.M., and on Sunday: 12 P.M. to 5 P.M. The next Computer show will be April 30 and May 1, 2005. The location will be at the Airport Convention Center, on Broadway outside the I-410 loop approximately 1/2 block on the left.

We have worked out an arrangement with Mr. Labaj. That as a volunteer, for the AlamoPC Organization membership sign-up table, (see figure 1) you become a vendor and have free admission to the center for that day. He in turn gets an advertisement in our AlamoPC magazine. Anyone that would like to volunteer to work, at the next computer show, can sign up at the Resource Center. Or sign up at our membership meeting on the second Monday of the month. I usually send out a reminder by e-mail on the Friday before the event.

Why would anyone go to these computer shows? To save money is a very good reason. You should know what you want before you go to these events. For instance, say you want to buy a recordable DVD disc. Before buying you must know what your DVD recorder is capable of using. Some machines use only a "+" disc and some only a A-A disc. Some DVD recorders can use both and don't care which disc you use. So, if you want to be more thrifty, you should know.

Like their advertisement says, you can purchase new complete systems, new hardware, and new software. Some vendors sell printers, scanners, monitors, inkjet recharge kits, imaging devices. Other vendors sell used hardware, multimedia upgrades, shareware, diagnostic equipment, cables and connectors. You can find bare bone systems, and computer related books. Are you in the market for refurbished systems or monitors? You'll find them there too. Is the quality good? Yes, is the answer from the people who work at Dr. Is In. One vendor sold non spillable drinking containers for your coffee, soda or whatever is your fancy. Laptop cases, cell phone hardware, cell phone packages, jewelry and artwork, more items that I can remember are for sale.

Alamo PC Trade Show Coordinator

Stephen Tech, Jr.

Photographer: Cary Hall



VoIP - It's Not Your Grandma's Telephone

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

If you make a lot of long distance phone calls – especially calls overseas – check out VOIP. It can save you a bundle.

VOIP stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol. You might also hear it called IP telephony, or Internet telephony. VOIP lets you make regular voice phone calls using your Internet connection rather than the public-switched telephone network (PSTN) that you currently use.

I spoke with Covita Moroney, one of the founders of the San Antonio Vocal Arts Ensemble, about her experience with VOIP.

SAVAE's last CD was "Ancient Echoes," which features the music of Jesus' time. Because the music is sung in Aramaic, Arabic and Hebrew, SAVAЕ hired a language teacher, an Egyptian who lives in Berlin. He made several trips to San Antonio when Ancient Echoes was under development but has had trouble getting a visa since September 11th.

SAVAE's next CD will also be sung in Middle Eastern languages and Covita and her husband, Christopher, wanted to keep their accents sharp. Their bright idea: continue their language lessons over the telephone! It was a brilliant concept, but also an expensive one.

Covita discovered VOIP. She uses a service called Skype and now pays 2.3¢ a minute for calls to Europe.

I tried Skype about a year ago, but only in its computer-to-computer mode. That's free! My brother works for a company that does business in China and England. Because of the time difference, he found that he had to talk to his counterparts after normal business hours.

He was looking for a computer-based solution but found that IM – instant messenger – applications would not work from behind a firewall. Skype uses a different system: P2P, or Peer-to-Peer networking, the same system that is used for file sharing in applications like Napster.

Skype worked from behind the firewall and allowed him to talk to China from his home computer, for free. Free! He used me to practice on. His company ultimately decided to use phone cards: more expensive but more flexible.

Since then, Skype has added computer-to-phone connections. They call this service "SkypeOut." Using PayPal, Covita bought credits in 10 Euro increments (\$13.56.) This is good for almost 10 hours of talking to Berlin.

Calls within the continental United States, Canada, Western Europe and Australia are 2.3¢ a minute. So are calls to Monterrey and Mexico City; other calls to Mexico are about 11¢. There is no rhyme or reason to the rate structure: a call to Israel is 4¢ a minute to a land line, 14¢ to a mobile phone. You can see the entire list at www.skype.com/products/skypeout/rates/all_rates.html >

The Moroneys use a Mac. They have a Plantronics headset (www.plantronics.com/skype) that plugs into the USB port of their computer. I've tried it using a cheap -- \$10 -- stereo headset with a built-in boom mike plugged into the headphone jack of my computer. It works fine. The sound quality is great, better than on our brand-new 5.8GHz digital Motorola phones.

Covita confirms that the sound quality is excellent, an important factor for the intensive language practice she and her husband are doing. The network is entirely digital.

If you're using a PC you'll need to be running Windows 2000 or XP, have a machine that runs at least 400MHz and, of course, have a sound card and a microphone or headset. Skype claims it will work on a dial-up connection; all of the other services described ask for broadband.

The software is free from their site, www.skype.com. It's easy to figure out and there are plenty of help files in case you run into problems.

Unlike other VOIP services, SkypeOut does not require a contract, making it a good starting point for people interested in experimenting with the technology. The main drawback to Skype is that the person initiating the call must do so from a computer.

For other services, costs range from about \$15 to \$35 a month for local and long distance calls within the continental US. Overseas calls are generally extra and vary in price from the low Skype rates to about double that. There is often a setup fee, plus the requirement to purchase either telephone adapter or special phone that hooks up to your computer through your router (yes, you need a router, too). Figure on at least \$100 to get started. You will pay if you cancel a year-long contract.

So why sign a contract if Skype is so cheap and easy? The advantage other VOIP services give your IP phone is its own regular phone number. Anyone can call you from any phone.

Most services include ALL of the services that your local telephone company charges extra for: Caller ID, call waiting, call forwarding, voice mail, etc. Some will forward your phone messages to e-mail, as a wav file. For a modest fee (generally, \$5.00 a month) you can get additional phone numbers in other area codes. If your aging parents live in Florida or a son is in college in Boston, get an extra number within their area code and they can call you for free. Some services allow you to designate one phone number outside your area code as a "freebie" for calling in.

New VOIP companies are cropping up all the time. The established telecom companies seem to be the most expensive with the fewest features. AT&T CallVantage is \$29.99 a month; Verizon's VoiceWing is \$34.95. If your VOIP company goes belly up, with Local Number Portability you should be able to transfer your phone number to a new provider.

If you want to explore some of the more fully-featured services, visit their Web sites:

Packet 8: www.packet8.com

VOIP Net: <www.voip.com>

Vonage: <www.vonage.com>

Lingo: <www.lingo.com>

SpeakEasy: <www.speakeasy.com>

AT&T: <www.usa.att.com/callvantage/index.jsp?>

Verizon: <www22.verizon.com/ForYourHome/voip/voiphome.aspx>

Also look over the features carefully. Not all of them have E911 services for emergency calls. If you call to a particular overseas location, check the rate structures carefully. VOIP Net seems to have excellent rates to Mexico. Lingo has 2¢ calls to Israel. I'd be happier with a system that uses an adapter to connect my current phone rather than be forced to buy an expensive proprietary phone that only works with a particular system.

One of the biggest drawbacks to VOIP is that it requires a computer, an Internet connection and electricity. If your computer goes down, your Internet connection poops out or the electricity fails – no phone.

Covita's experience was so positive I bought my 10 Euros worth of long distance and immediately called friends in Jerusalem on their mobile phone. It was much clearer than

calling on my cell phone. I talked for 10 minutes for \$1.20. What a deal! I still have more than 9 Euros remaining.

Then I tried calling my brother and got an error: #13501. I logged onto Skype's live help and in a minute or two was chatting with Kris. It's an outage, he said. Try again in two or three hours. Five hours later and Skype was still down. Not good enough. From what I hear, this is a common problem with all of the providers.

The service providers hype that you can get rid of your POTS (plain old telephone system) and do all your calling through a combination of cable modem and VOIP. I'm not quite that adventurous.

If you want to learn more about the technology behind VOIP some good sites are:

FCC: <www.fcc.gov/voip/>

VOIP WIKI: <www.voip-info.org/tiki-index.php>

How Stuff Works: <computer.howstuffworks.com/ip-telephony.htm>

VOIP Watch: <andyabramson.blogs.com/voipwatch/>

If you do a lot of long distance calling, VOIP could save you hundreds of dollars a year. It's worth a look.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC. Her Skype user ID is suives.

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Who runs the Internet?

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

It's fashionable to say that no one runs the Internet –anarchy! That's not quite true. A phenomenon as big and complex as the Internet must have someone setting the standards. Here are short descriptions of the 11 organizations that run the show.

This list does not include the Internet's physical network structure, which is determined by commercial network operators who build and join their systems in response to market forces.

ISOC – The Internet Society

In January 1992, the Internet Society was chartered as a non-profit corporation.

Its mission is "To assure the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world" and to "facilitate open development of standards, protocols, administration and the technical infrastructure of the Internet." It's a membership society and you can join for free at <www.isoc.org/>.

IETF - The Internet Engineering Task Force

Started in 1986, IETF is a grassroots technical group consisting of network administrators, designers, researchers, vendors and users, etc. It now operates as an activity of ISOC and is responsible to it. It is divided into broad units called areas, which are divided into more specialized working groups that concern themselves with the engineering and architecture of the Internet. It is the principal body that develops, tests and implements new Internet technological standards, including protocols. Most of their work is accomplished through mailing lists, which you can join from their Web site, <www.ietf.org/>.

IESG - Internet Engineering Steering Group

Formed in 1989, IESG is the management group of the IETF. It vets and approves IETF standards and manages the standards process.

IRTF - Internet Research Task Force

Formed in 1989, IRTF is a self-organized research group which investigates Internet topics that are too uncertain or too advanced to be standardized. When IRTF produces a specification that is suitable for standardization, it is processed via IETF. Their Web site is at <www.irtf.org/>

IRSG - Internet Research Steering Group

The Internet Research Steering Group (IRSG) is the management group of the IRTF.

IAB - Internet Architecture Board

IAB oversees the architecture of the Internet on behalf of ISOC, including protocols and other standards. Their Web site is <www.iab.org/>.

RFC Editor

The RFC Editor is the organization that edits, manages, publishes and maintains the authoritative archive of the Request For Comments (RFC) documents, which are the Internet's documents of record. ISOC funds the RFC Editor. All of the Internet's RFCs are online at <www.rfc-editor.org/>.

ICANN - Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

In the late '90s, when the U.S. government privatized the Internet, it chartered ICANN to be its non-profit technical body, including administration of the Domain Name System. The U.S. Department of Commerce contracts with ICANN to perform the IANA (see below). Their Web site is at <www.icann.org/>.

IANA - Internet Assigned Numbers Authority

IANA oversees Internet Protocol (IP) address allocation, manages the Domain Name System (DNS) and coordinates protocol parameter assignment. Their Web site is at <www.iana.org/>.

W3C - World Wide Web Consortium

W3C was founded by Tim Berners-Lee in October, 1994 at MIT in collaboration with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). The W3C develops, tests and implements new Web technological standards, similar to the IETF but focused on the Web. Their Web site is <www.w3.org/>.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC and is on the Board of Directors of SalsaNet <www.salsa.net/>, the South Central Texas Chapter of the Internet Society.



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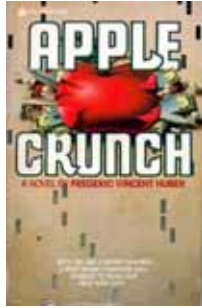
Computer Crimes

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Apple Crunch by Frederic Vincent Huber

Paperback, Avon, 1981, \$2.95, 264 pages

A computer consultant and a young hacker, their lives ruined by sloppy glitches in New York City's municipal computer system, team up to get revenge on a corrupt system by stealing the city's budget data and holding it for ransom.



This is a lighthearted caper – if you like John Sandford's Kidd novels, this will be right up your alley. The charm of this book is in its relative antiquity: 1981! Remote terminals are described with awe and the city is struggling with defining what constitutes a computer crime. The Big Apple Computer Club – a charming collection of Nerds not

unlike Alamo PC – figures prominently in the plot. Out of print, but a copy is in the Learning Center library.

Interrupt by Toni Duggins

Paperback, Tor, 1993, \$4.99 319 pages

Computer engineer Andy Faulkner is stunned when 40,000 phones in the Silicon Valley – phones on his switch! – suddenly go dead and the glitch is tracked back to his deaf 11-year-old son's TDD device. Suspended from his job and unfairly framed for the outage and the murder of a co-worker, he takes matters into his own hands when his son is kidnapped.

Lots of details about telephony, written during an era when PacBell was



switching over from a manual to a digital system. Interesting plot twists computer code, compilers and the Stanford University telephony lab that will interest the geek set. Out of print, but a copy is in the Learning Center library.

Susan Ives, past president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her. Remember the Alibi Bookstore at 8055 West Ave. #101, San Antonio, TX (at the corner of West Ave. and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darndest to keep the recommended books in stock.

Book Review

Using Mac OS X, v10.3 Panther

By Brad Miser

\$39.99 US

Published by Que

Reviewed by Shane Hicks, Alamo PC

The ONLY Mac OS X book you need! Or, so it says on the cover. Well, that's a pretty bold boast. Let's take a look at what this book has to offer and decide for ourselves.

This book can double as workout equipment at 992 pages. There are seven sections, with twenty-nine chapters and two appendixes. The coverage is quite extensive.

Who is this book for? This book assumes an understanding of the fundamentals of OS X. While someone with limited computer experience may find the book useful, Brad suggests getting an additional primer, or companion book. So—he already admits this may not be the only book you need for your Mac! J

Part I: Exploring the Core

This book reads like a textbook. It begins with the benefits of going with OS X and dissects the OS into its major components. Users new to the use of accounts and permissions will find the section on creating accounts useful. A discussion of Finder and how to manage its different settings follows. Next,

Brad talks about how to use different menu options, the basics of Exposé, and how to manage files and folders. Customization of the desktop and the Dock comes after that. Chapter Six demonstrates how to install and use applications under OS X. Chapter Seven covers the Classic (OS 9) environment. The next chapter talks about customizing the user environment and changing system settings. The section ends with a chapter on the UNIX core on which OS X is based.

Part II: Connecting to the World

This section starts with a chapter on various ways to connect to the Internet and continues with a discussion of Airport, Apple's wireless networking standard. Chapter Twelve is devoted to setting up and managing e-mail in OS X. The next chapter covers connecting to and navigating the World Wide Web. This chapter contains some useful information on using Safari, Apple's browser. Chapter Fourteen highlights the features of a .Mac subscription, which allow for on-line backups and homepage hosting. I find the inclusion of this chapter questionable, since .Mac is a pay-as-you-go additional service offered by Apple—not a set of built-in features of OS X.

Part III: Living the Digital Life

Apple's extremely proud of their iLife suite of applications, bundled with OS X. The next several chapters cover iPhoto, iTunes, iMovie, and iDVD. There is also a chapter on the use of Quicktime to edit movies. Again, I find a true discussion of Quicktime Pro perhaps out-of-place in this manual, as it's an upgrade to the OS—not an included application. The section ends with instruction on using iCal, iSync, and iChat.

Part IV: Expanding Your System

This section begins by explaining different hardware components available on the Mac. These chapters are excellent overviews of installing, configuring, and managing such components in this version of Mac OS. Included are details on attaching storage and networking components to your system.

Part V: Living in a Networked World

This section talks about setting up and testing a network. The discussion of the Mac Network Utility was extremely interesting. It provides a graphical interface for performing many TCP/IP tests that I'm accustomed to performing from a command line interface. The Mac OS X to the Max: Networking Mac OS X with Windows Computers discussion in Chapter Twenty-six will be useful for anyone operating in a mixed environment. Chapter Twenty-seven shows how to share the Mac's Internet connection with other users on the local network.

Part VI: Protecting, Maintaining, and Repairing Your Mac

Automatic Updates start this section. The use of hard disk maintenance utilities and the importance of backing up your data follow. Some security features are also discussed, along with some tips on how to protect your Mac from outside attacks. Chapter Twenty-nine covers some preventative steps you can use to avoid having problems with your Mac and shows how to manage the performance of your system through the use of the

Mac system monitor utility. The rest of the section contains various hints of how to fix common problems that arise with the system.

Part VII: Appendixes

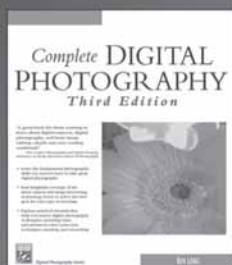
The Appendixes are fairly straightforward. The first covers installing and upgrading to OS X 10.3 Panther. The final is on features of the OS that are available when using the system with a Macintosh laptop.

Summary

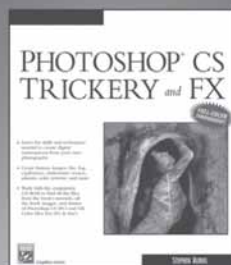
I found this book to be quite comprehensive, though certainly not the only Mac book I'd ever need. The formatting and chapter structure was clear. There were plenty of examples and step-by-step procedures for performing various actions. The explanations were easy to understand, though sometimes a little too simplistic for me. I'd prefer more hardcore, in-depth discussions of available features. But these chapters don't provide much more than an overview of their promised topics. I didn't see many highlighted gee-whiz goodies or ways to make using the system easier. On top of that, I felt there were a few chapters that didn't belong, as their discussed features aren't integral with OS X and require an additional expense.

Overall, this is a solid entry in the market for books on Mac OS X 10.3 Panther. I'd find it useful in a classroom environment to teach the basics of modern Macintosh computer systems and this version of the OS. However, I'd not curl up with the book for an enjoyable read on my own. It's written as a text, without the humor and anecdotes I've enjoyed with other Mac authors. If you need a reference source for the basics, like establishing a small network, this is a good book to have on your shelf—but it didn't stand out to me as being superior to any of the other comprehensive books in the same category. It's NOT the only Mac OS X book that I'll ever need.

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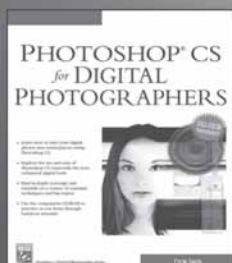
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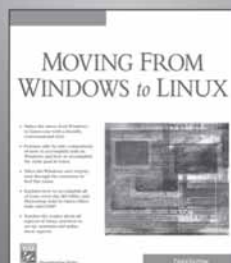
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Book Review

PDF Hacks: 100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools

By Sid Steward

\$24.95 US

Published by O'Reilly

Reviewed by Susan Ives, Alamo PC



We thought that putting the PC Alamode online would be a snap. Instead of sending the file to the printer, we'd send it to the server. A five minute job.

Wrong. We could have done it that way, of course, but we would have been doing the members a disservice. The PDF format is a robust one, capable of much more than posting a static document on a Web page.

PDF stands for Portable Document Format. At its most basic, it makes it possible for someone to create a document using any program, no matter how obscure or expensive, and convert it into a format that can be viewed by anyone who has the free reader software installed.

The PDF format requires two pieces of software. The person creating the document uses Adobe Acrobat or another program or service that actually converts the document to the PDF format. The person using the document needs the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, which allows him or her to view the document.

Our first step was to purchase a copy of Adobe Acrobat. The editor has been using the PDF creator "lite", integrated into PageMaker 6.5, to create our PDFs. This is adequate for making a static, readable copy of the document to take to the printer, but lacks the features of a fully-blown PDF.

PDF Hacks starts where the Adobe manual leaves off. It gives you instructions on how to use some of the gee-whiz features of the PDF format, many of which require third-party programs, computer scripts, or just a little tinkering with the program itself.

It is not a substitute for the Acrobat or Acrobat Reader manuals, nor is it for beginners. There are other books that do that better. O'Reilly defines "hacks" as clever solutions to interesting problems, and that is exactly what this book provides. Even the hacks labeled as being for beginners are best left to those who have mastered the basics of the PDF format.

Here are some of the topics that are covered in the book. These 12 are also freely available on the O'Reilly Web site, at hacks.oreilly.com/pub/q/all_hacks#123.

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"Bookmark PDF Pages in Reader" is considered a beginner's tip and involves downloading, unzipping and copying a JavaScript into your Acrobat Reader file folder. If this makes your head spin, you can assume that this book is way over your head.

I'll be passing this book onto the magazine editor and then onto the guys that are maintaining the server. It has a lot of good ideas that you will probably see incorporated into the magazine over the next few months.

You can buy the book from Amazon.com for \$17.46 www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0596006551/alamopcscomputer, or it is available in local bookstores.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.

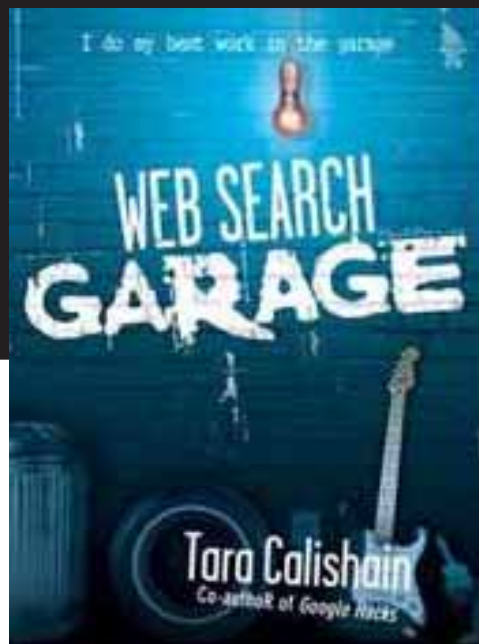
Book Review

Web Search Garage

By Tara Calishain

\$24.95 US

Reviewed by Dick Evans, Greater Tampa Bay PC User Group



Web Search Garage, by Tara Calishain, is an easy-to-read manual describing how and where to find text, images, and audio on the web. Ms. Calishain is co-author of **GOOGLE HACKS** and host of the Website at ResearchBuzz.com. Written for PC users with at least the basics of navigating the web, the book includes quickhit snippets and advice for in-depth searching. The reader doesn't have to read from cover to cover, but may examine chapters of interest. Ms. Calishain's informality and candor is refreshing: "The best I can tell you is..." (p.84); "I use....I might try....If you have {}, perhaps you can...." (p.98)

After explaining browsers' purposes, the author describes how to pick and prepare one and how to pick useful programs. Many of the suggested websites in the book are annotated, e.g., www.mozilla.com is "free," and www.opera.com is described as "free supported by advertising" with "multiple window capability." She examines types of formatting, (including HTML, JavaScript, Java, Active X, and others) and tips on optimizing for security (using firewall and anti-virus software) and for speed (which plugins can be turned off and which are needed).

She analyzes search toolbars and what she calls "book marklets." Her numerous recommendations include a site with over 17,000 different types of calculators; another with over 10,000 medical terms, www.medterms.com/; another for geeks with thousands of definitions, www.techweb.com/encyclopedia/; www.glossarist.com with pointers to over 6,100 dictionaries and glossaries on the web, from arts and culture to transportation; and www.download.com, a repository of lots of software: latest browsers, pop-up blockers, spyware detectors.

One chapter deals with finding friendly communities discussing topics in which you're interested; Usenet (discussion groups hosted by news servers or maintained on web sites); a good analysis of Google Groups; points on how to avoid spam and hoaxes; blogs' popularity vs. their credibility; hints regarding when to search from general to specific and visa versa; and tips for finding and searching mailing lists.

She examines special syntaxes and search principles used in obtaining certain types of results; how to narrow searches for song lyrics, technical help, biographical information, associations, and lists of experts; how to organize facts using bookmarks or text files and how to analyze search results. She offers strategies to keep up with new sites and resources and finding a search giving a useful, but manageable, number of re-

sults. Evolving resource usage is emphasized. Feedster, Daypop and Gigablast are parts of the author's vocabulary.

Ms. Calishain emphasizes credibility and discusses sites which may be satirical, proselytizing, or wrong, versus legitimate ones; evaluating web sources if citing; and checking internet facts (among others, www.snopes.com), of course). Search suggestions for jobs, phonebooks, local and international information, images, genealogy, consumer help, and tech support for security and games www.techtutorials.com/ are included, with a chapter specifically designed for kids-safe searching (e.g., Yahoo!igans and Ask Jeeves for Kids and others).

The book explores what search engines are all about, tools to use them, and gadgets and tweaks for making research easier. Who doesn't need to understand how searching works and how to work up-to-date search engines?

Web Search Garage by Tara Calishain, published by Prentice Hall 2005, is well-worth the investment. The publisher's website for professional technical references is www.phptr.com.



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Software Review

Antispyware

Published by various

Reviewed by Susan Ives, Alamo PC

If you are connected to the Internet your computer has adware and spyware on it.

As the suffix-ware implies, ad- and spyware are little programs that are installed on your computer without your knowledge or permission. You can get them by visiting a Website, downloading a music, video or program file or by opening an infected e-mail.

Adware inserts advertising on your computer. Even if you are not currently connected to the Internet, it will pop up irritating advertising windows. Spyware spies on you. Working in the background, it can do such things as capture your keystrokes while typing passwords, read and track your e-mail and harvest the e-mail addresses in your address book and record what Web sites you visit.

The industry seems to be calling both of these infestations spyware now, and we will follow that convention. You might also see the term malware, which includes adware, spyware, viruses and all other types of malicious software.

If you get enough of this on your computer it can slow down your system: if it gets bad enough, it can grind it down to a halt. Spyware will not be prevented or deleted by your virus software or blocked by a firewall, although both are necessary programs to install if you expect to keep your computer clean and running smoothly.

Microsoft estimates that half of all Windows crashes are caused by spyware. Dell has calculated that 20 percent of its help desk calls are rooted in spyware infections. About 80 percent of home PCs are infected with spyware, and the average unprotected PC has 28 of these malicious programs running in the background.

Some signs of a spyware infection are:

- * Your computer is sluggish and crashes often
- * Popup ads appear even when you are not online
- * Your settings – such as the start page or preferred search page -- change without your permission
- * New components – maybe a toolbar icon -- are added to your Web browser without your permission

Alamo PC's Bruce Cramer has a great article about spyware in the September 2004 issue of PC Alamo: <www.alamopc.org/pcalamode/features/F20040901.shtml>

It's tricky to evaluate an anti-spyware program. A program can fail in three main areas: It can fail to identify malicious software; it can generate false-positives (identifying needed software as bad), or fail to remove all traces of bad software, allowing it to reinfect your computer. To judge all of these categories you really need a controlled situation: an infected computer in which all of the infections are known. I don't have that.

To complicate matters, some programs that advertise themselves as anti-

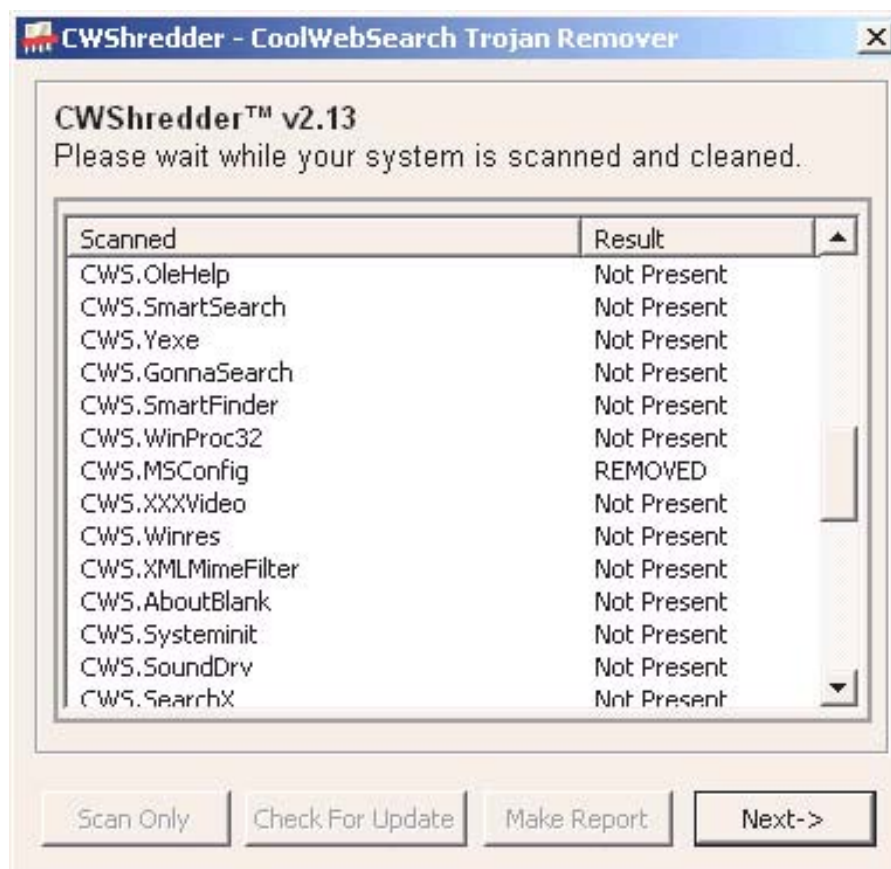


Figure 1

spyware programs are actually spyware themselves. If you receive an e-mail that says “your computer is infected with spyware” or a popup Window from an unknown source announcing the same, do not act on this. Always get your anti-spyware programs from a trusted source.

In addition to my anti-virus routine (I have the Norton Security Suite installed, which includes a personal firewall, virus protection, spam blocking and popup blocking) I am currently running five anti-spyware programs.

I regularly run the free versions of Ad-Aware <www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/> and Spybot <www.safer-networking.org/en/>, two programs that eliminate some ad-and spyware. But not all.

Another freeware program is CWSShredder, which gets rid of “CoolWebSearch,” a malware program that redirects your browser different URLs. It finally got rid of an infestation called CWS.MSConfig that other programs kept finding but never seemed to remove. (figure 1) Download it from <www.intermute.com/spysubtract/cwshredder_download.html>

Microsoft Windows Anti-Spyware beta became available this January. It’s free – for now -- and can be downloaded from <www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/>

I noticed two great features right off the bat.

First, it can be scheduled to do a daily system sweep at a convenient time; mine’s scheduled for 2 a.m. every morning. With the free versions of Ad-Aware and Spybot you have to manually activate the scan – when and if you remember. The automation is nice.

Second, instead of just detecting installed infections, it stops them at the source using three “agents.”

The Internet agent covers modem and WI-FI connections. It notifies you when a new user connects to your wireless network, prevents changes to TCP/IP, DNS and proxy settings, and stops remote activation of the windows messenger service.

The system agent prevents changes to system files from being changed and prevents malicious files from being added to the boot procedure.

The application agent prevents alterations from being made to Internet Explorer.

If something suspicious happens, the agents pop up a notification requesting that you block or allow the even. There are 59 checkpoints; each can be activated or deactivated individually.

There are three advanced tools. A system explorer allows you to view and modify Windows settings that are hidden or difficult to change. Browser Hijack Restore (Figure 2) let’s you specify your browser defaults, such as home page and search page, and prevents them from being overwritten by malicious software. The Track Eraser erases your tracks: history, search results, etc.

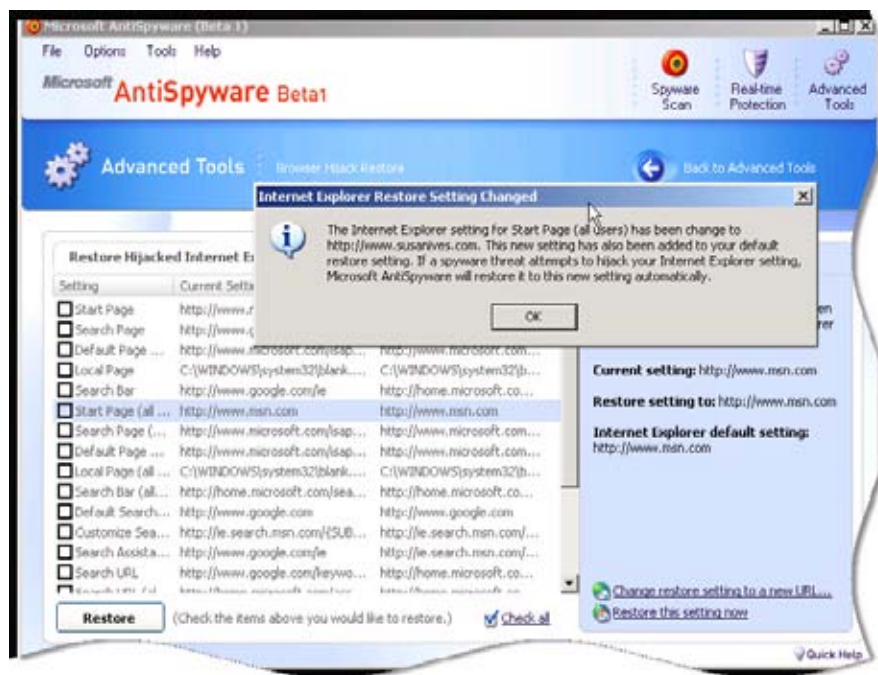


Figure 2

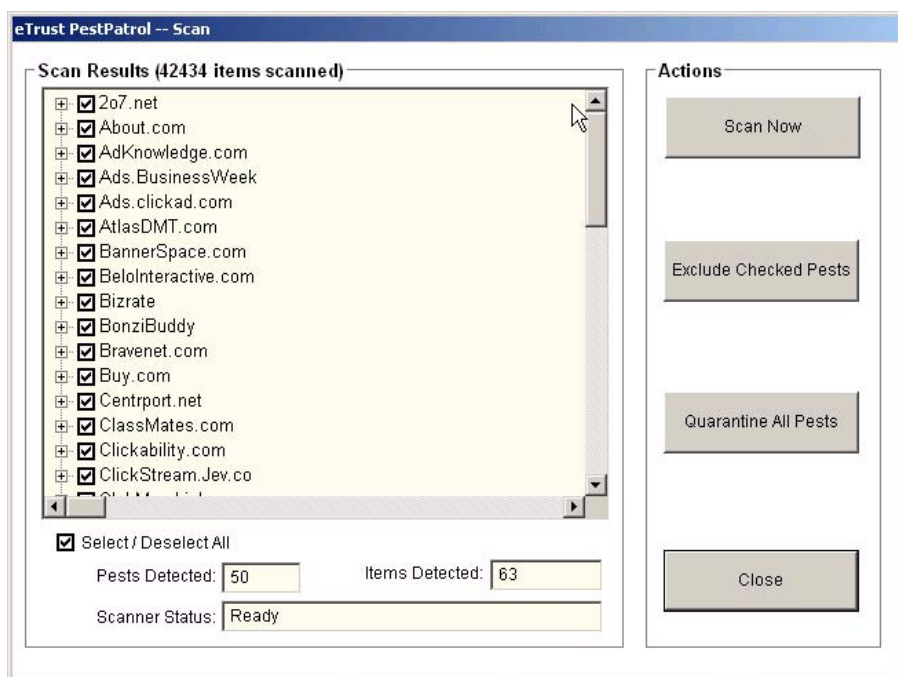


Figure 3

There is also a “suspected spyware reporting tool.” If you get an infection, you can report it to Microsoft so that they can add it to their malware database. Microsoft inherited the community of users from a Chicago software company, Giant, from whom it bought the program in December. It gave the program a cosmetic facelift and released a beta, or test version, of the software a few weeks later.

The ability to collect and analyze information voluntarily submitted by users should ensure that new spyware is detected quickly.

The Microsoft program gives detailed explanations of each and every problem that it finds: the location of the threat, its seriousness and recommended actions.

All of the reviews on the Internet seems to rate this program highly. About.com, for example, said it picked up 91% of problems, compared to 65% for Ad-Aware and 55% for Spybot.

I ran Anti-spyware (beta) after I ran Ad-Aware and Spybot and the Microsoft software found 12 infections remaining on my computer.

Microsoft hasn’t yet made a definitive announcement about how their anti-spyware program will be marketed. The odds seem to favor it being bundled with the next version of Windows and remaining free for Windows 2000, and XP users. Microsoft is reportedly also working on an enterprise version of the program that will service many computers from a server.

eTrust™ PestPatrol® Anti-Spyware is the only program that isn’t free. It costs \$29.95, and since it is a subscription-based service you must renew your subscription after a year. You

can download the full or a 30-day trial version at <www.pestpatrol.com>.

It has a look and feel very much like the Microsoft software. You can schedule full system scans and software updates for times convenient for you; active “active protection,” which prevents spyware from infecting your system and select, one-by-one, which malicious programs are eliminated so that you don’t delete something you need. Their “prevalence program” is similar to Microsoft’s “suspected spyware reporting tool”: you have the option of sending your scan results back to the company so that they can get early warning of new spyware variations and maintain statistics on infections.

I ran Pest Patrol after all of the other programs on my system had a crack at the adware and it still uncovered 63 infections (figure 3).

Pest Patrol is owned by Computer Associates, whose primary business is in corporate security software: you’ll find it in ATMs and airport security. This is their home edition. An enterprise/server version is also available. The home version requires Windows Me/98SE/2000/XP; the Microsoft software only works with 2000 and XP.

Since I got serious about stopping spyware my computer has been zippier: it boots up faster, runs smoother and crashes less often. I recommend installing ALL of these programs. It doesn’t seem like any one program catches everything, but all of them together seem to be doing the trick. They all play well together: no conflicts.

Spyware is getting worse. As soon as someone figures out how to stop it or clean it up, the evil-doers tweak the code so that more stuff slips by. Anti-spyware is not a nice-to-have addon. It’s a necessity.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.

Software Review

Quick Reply

Published by Erstenware

\$19.95

Reviewed by Susan Ives, Alamo PC

It takes 140 words to give driving directions to my house. I don’t know how fast you type, but for me that’s probably four or five minutes of typing plus another minute or two to make sure I didn’t type left when I meant right.

Want my phone numbers? Add another minute or two. You say you need a short biography? I’ve got a file with that somewhere on my hard drive – just give me 10 minutes to find it so I can cut-and-paste it into my reply

Quick Reply automates repetitive e-mail typing chores.

Figure 1 shows Quick reply in action. I created a “reply” containing directions to my house. I opened my e-mail program, then Quick Reply and just dragged the snippet into the e-mail. That’s it! If you keep Quick Reply running in the background the entire process takes about five seconds. I just saved myself five minutes.



Figure 1

I found drag-and-drop the easiest way to use the program, although there are several other options. You can easily create macros: ha1-spacebar will also insert my home address. Another method is to create hot key combinations, such as <CTRL>+<ALT>+3, which can be typed right into the e-mail to insert the data.

Your macros can contain variable data. Figure 2 shows a macro with two variables: a name and a Web site URL. When you insert the macro, the program prompts you to fill in the variables.

Quick Reply also works with any program that can accept drag-and-drop information. Figure 3 shows the program (in its compact mode) being used to drag a snippet into a web-based form. I created a snippet that says "Susan Ives is a Past President of Alamo PC" that I inserted at the end of this MS Word document just by typing pp1, a macro I created.

There's an excellent tutorial and video that explains how to use the program. It's very intuitive, however, and took me a just few minutes to figure out.

In a perfect world I would have added some features.

* It would have been nice if it was fully integrated into MS Outlook, my e-mail program, but then it wouldn't work with other applications. So it's not a perfect world!

* It would be convenient if there was a way to facilitate dragging-and-dropping frequently used attachments, such as my resume, photo or a map. I spend a lot of time hunting for them on my hard drive.

This is NOT a program for mass-mailers. It's for people who type a lot of repetitive text and need a way to automate the process. It does that very well, so I recommend it. You will need Windows 98 or higher and a least 1MB of free disk space to use Quick Reply.

Download it from <www.erstenware.com/>. A free trial is available, or you can purchase a full version for \$19.95 over the Internet or by phone or fax.

Susan Ives is a Past President of Alamo PC.

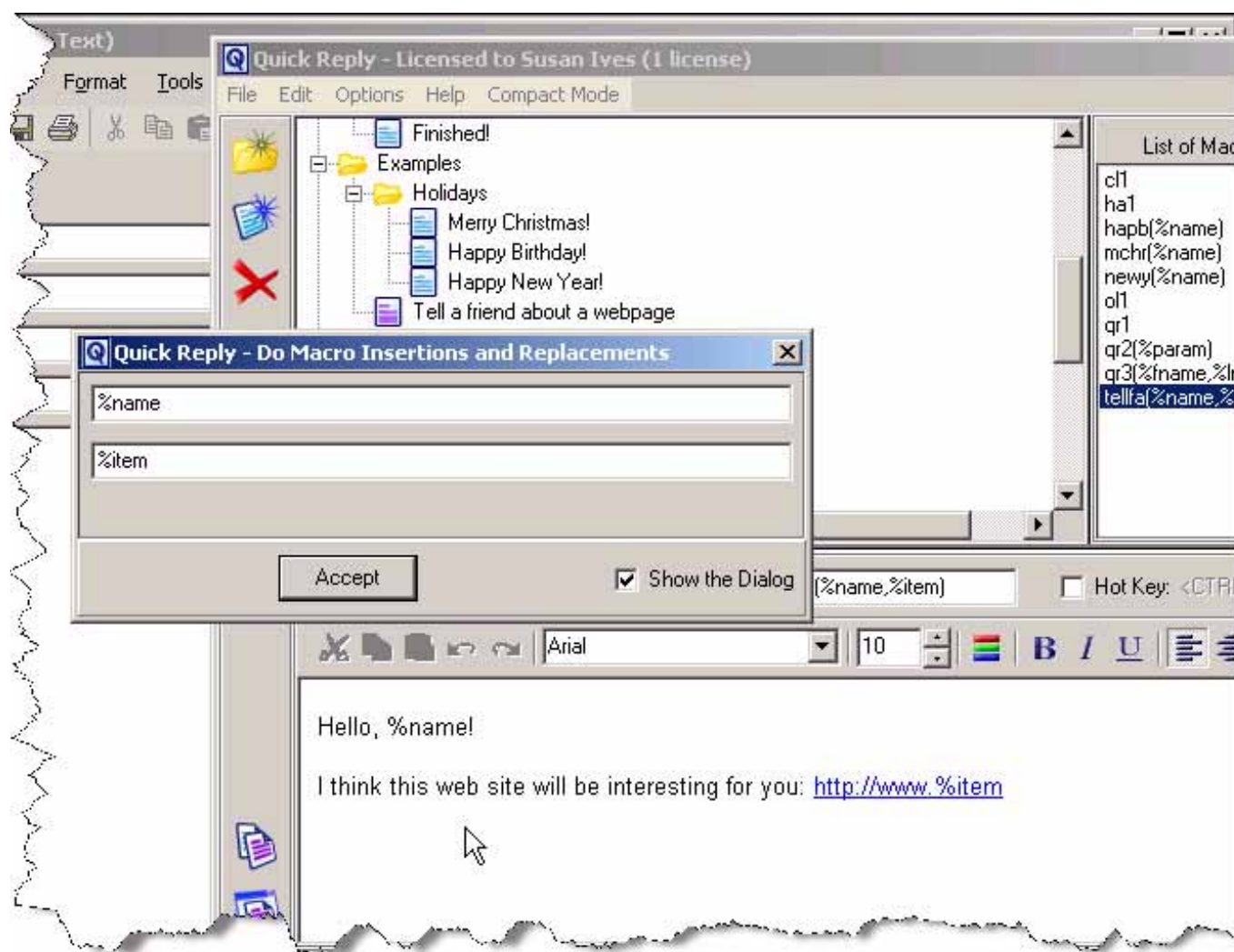


Figure 2

Software Review

Extream Thumbnails

Published by Exissoftware

\$34.95

Reviewed by Chuck Du Val, Alamo PC

Extreme Thumbnail Generator is distributed as shareware (try-before-you-buy). It is not free or public domain. You may use, copy and distribute it freely but should you find it useful and wish to use it after a trial period of 20 days, you must purchase a license. After 20 days, the unlicensed version will stop working.

The single license fee is \$34.95 with volume discounts available. It is available at www.exissoftware.com/thumbnail

The software was received as a disk without instructions, manual or any other information. Just the name of the program "Extreme Thumbnail Generator" label on the disk. It was easily installed but copying the instructions on how to use the software was somewhat confusing. I kept getting repeat copies of instructions already copied. The advertisement for the software indicates that "Extreme Thumbnail Generator is a powerful wizard-style tool for creating web image galleries. It will let you make beautiful albums with just a few mouse clicks!"

Perhaps this software is for creating web image galleries. My understanding, or rather fantasy, was that it would be an easy way to create thumbnail albums for my digital photograph collection. This did not prove to be the case and was most disappointing.

System requirements for the program are:

Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP

32 MB RAM

2 MB available disk space

On my first attempt to create an album of thumbnails, after processing 35 photos for a thumbnail album, I was out of memory (512 MB) and there was a computer shutdown.

Evidently this program was written and intended for a purpose other than my needs. Given the intention of the program, it is probably a very good vehicle for accomplishing web image galleries and web photo albums. There are many features for manipulating images; selecting images to be removed from a list, clear images from a list, move the images within a list, rotate images, as well as sorting. One can emboss, make gray scale, invert colors, adjust brightness and contrast, antialias, Gaussian blur, split blur, color noise, mono noise, adjust lightness and darkness, make mosaic designs, and adjust saturation. These adjustments can be made on an entire group of images or individual images.

The thumbnails can be modified in image size, border color, title and so on. Thumbnail pages may have the header, footer and other options modified. Image titles may be modified at any time. Logo images may be added in any position and at any transparency from 100% to 0%.

This is quite a powerful, versatile program that would be of great value to someone who generates web image galleries and/or web photo albums.



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Alamo Area Community Information System

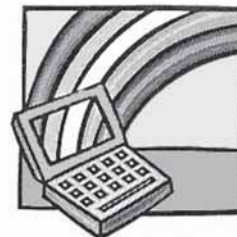
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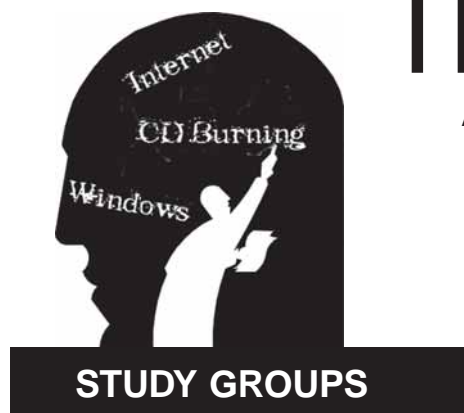
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Alamo PC Monthly Planner

April 2005

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<div>24</div>	<div>25</div> CorelDRAW 1 PowerPoint	<div>26</div> Word 2000	<div>27</div> WordPerfect	<div>28</div> Access Adv Photoshop Practice (Adv)	<div>29</div> Dr. is In HTML	<div>30</div> MCSE Adv																																																																																				



The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

Genealogy Study Group

For everyone interested in using their computer for genealogy. We will discuss currently available genealogy software, their pros and cons and meeting participants views as to best software to use for both beginners and advanced genealogists.

Contact: Jim Collier
<jcinquiry@earthlink.net>
210-710-5660

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge is stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities. Meetings are held on the First Thursday of the month in the UBS Conference Room, 200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 300 at 6:30PM to 8:30PM. If you wish to be added to our mailing list or for more information, contact below.

Contact: Maynard Burstein
<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

When: 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

Where: UBS/Paine Webber, 200 Concord Plaza Dr. Suite 300

Pre-registration: Call Maynard
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

.NET Study Group

A study group for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET technology. We will focus on VB.NET and C# to build Web applications that interact with a SQL Server database (ASP.NET & ADO.NET). Tools used will include the .NET Framework SDK and WebMatrix. Additional discussions and use of Visual Studio.NET will be included.

Contact: Joe Brazell 688-9508

When: 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', has just completed its study for the Exchange Server 2003 design exam to qualify for the MCSE : Messaging on Windows 2003. In January we will begin learning about either ISA Server 2004 or studying for the Windows XP exam. The MCSE Advanced SIG is designed for those who already have their MCSE certification. Space is limited. Therefore membership is restricted. The SIG meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Larry Lentz, MCSE on NT, W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging
<Larry@LentzComputer.Net>

When: Every Saturday, 8:30-noon

Where: Contact Larry

Pre-registration: Yes - contact Larry
Technical Rating ★★★★★

Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Organization Small Business Server Special Interest Group held its regular monthly meeting on Friday, March 4th at 8 AM in the Alamo PC Learning Center in Cross Roads Mall, San Antonio, Texas. We had 18 in attendance. Following our Taco Social, Ken Strain, The Montopolis Group, led a great discussion on antivirus solutions for Small Business Server. The Alamo PC SBS SIG will host the Microsoft SBS User Group Tour on March 30th. Even so, the group elected to hold their regular monthly meeting as well on April 1st (no joke) even though it is only a couple of days after our 'big event'. Edgar Chew, Edgar Chew and Associates, will lead a discussion on Swing Migration in April. The Alamo PC SBS SIG meets the first Friday of every month at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Cross Roads Mall, San Antonio, Texas. All interested parties are welcome to attend. For more information contact SIG Chairman Larry Lentz, <Larry@LentzComputer.net>

Photoshop Study Group

Visit the Learning Center every Thursday (except holidays) from 1pm - 5pm for advanced Photoshop practice. Basic Photoshop practice will be held every Friday (except holidays) from 1pm - 5pm during even numbered months. **Only students who have attended the Photoshop Basics class are eligible to attend.**

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Thursdays & even month Fridays

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: no
Technical Rating ★★ - ★★★

Advanced Access Study Group

This study group is designed for people with experience with Microsoft Access who wish to learn and share ideas on advanced forms, VBA code, reports, queries, etc. Attendees should already be familiar with database design basics and the basics of building forms, reports and queries in Access. Topics include using graphs, database security, SQL Server connectivity, customer functions or other topics of interest.

Contact: Joseph Kubon
<joseph.kubon@padgett-cpa.com>
210-828-6281 x 1554

When: Fourth Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★★

C/C++ Study Group

Please note we are currently a study group and no longer a Class. C/C++ Study Group Our group consists of 3 to 6 regular members who meet twice a month to discuss their plans and progress on development of software for experimental use. We do not plan to offer C or C++ courses in this study group. To join the study group, get acquainted with some of its members and consider preparing a brief presentation of your planned or current efforts.

Contact:
Bruce McAlexander
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 210-680-0231

Murry Adams
<mnadams@texas.net> 210-696-0047

Carl Deneke
<cdeneke@Texas.net> 210-496-6397

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★ - ★★★

Commodore Users of SA

Contact: Diana Jones
830-303-1220

When: Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★★★

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

Power Internet Study Group

This year we are covering eight subjects: PC-to-PC data transfer, third party data transfer, DSL and direct cable broadband connectivity, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook and virus protection in communications.

Contact: John Woody
<jwoody@texas.net>
210-494-5684

When: 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: No

Technical Rating ★★

Quicken

Each month the Quicken Study Group leaders will provide tips, techniques, answer questions, solve problems, and present an in-depth discussion of some aspect of Quicken for Windows. Have questions about how to do something in Quicken? Come to the Study Group and have questions answered.

Contact:

Larry Mathews

<clm.sat@iname.com>

Yael Friedlander

<yaelf@sbcglobal.net> 210-492-1163

When: 3rd Monday, 7-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: Not required but preferred. Call Yael Friedlander between 8am & 5pm.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

WordPerfect Evening Study Group

We demonstrate projects and features of the latest version of WordPerfect. We also like to work on real life situations with our members who have questions. Co-chairs Frances Pape and Paul Chevalier.

Contact: Cynthia Thompson
210-655-1058

When: 3rd Wednesday, 7-9pm

Where: Call Cynthia for directions

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Cynthia

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Call for New Instructor

A Computer Literacy class leader is needed for an additional class. Please contact John Gaddis at <education@alamopc.org> or 494-9449.

FREE CLASSES

Computer Literacy Class

This course is designed for beginners and those who want to brush up their computer skills. Students learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills used in many software programs, and gain a basic understanding of surfing the Web and using e-mail. The course prepares students to enroll in a variety of second level courses.

Contact: David Henry <oobootes@juno.com>

When: First three Saturdays of every month, 1-3pm

Where: Resource Center

Pre-registration: Yes - Call the Learning, 210-736-0080

Technical Rating ★

CorelDRAW I Class

This basic class discusses basic tools and effects, concentrating on fills, blends, envelopes and other special effects for the next few months.

Contact: Steve Tech
<stephentechjr@yahoo.com>
210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★

DotNetNuke Configuration and Management

This is a class on using the DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. The class will focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 2.x portal. This portal is a service available to Alamo PC members. The class will setup web pages, insert modules on the pages. Modify and edit the look of the pages as well as the data in the pages. Modules will include: Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogger, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML.

Contact: Joe Brazell,
<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 345-2207

When: August 31 7PM - 9PM

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

This 4-session class shows you how to buy and sell at Internet auctions using the eBay system (excludes real estate and automobiles).

Contact: Learning Center 736-0080
<learncenter@alamopc.org>

When: 7-9pm on Wednesdays.

2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd February

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★

Excel 2000 Class

Students will become familiar with Excel 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons and shortcut keys. Learn how to create, format, save and print an Excel spreadsheet. Understand and use formulas, work with worksheets and workbooks, and learn the basic productivity elements of Excel. The Excel 2000 Basics Class will use the Excel 2000 Step By Step book. This book will be helpful but is not required.

Contact: Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

When: First four Tuesdays of odd

numbered months (Jan, Mar, May) 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

HTML Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML. Some of the topics discussed include formatting text, links and forms. Additional non-HTML topics include planning, design and management, color and graphics, CSS, FTP and dealing with search engines. The 10 week class will begin a new cycle each January, May and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: every Friday 7-9 pm

Where: Alamo PC Learning Center

Prerequisite:

Home Page Jumpstart
familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes

To register e-mail Mike at

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

Technical Rating: ★

Home Page Jumpstart

A general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is *not* a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual and a training disk. Not hands-on.

Contact:

Susan Ives <suives@texas.net>

210-694-4582

When: 2nd Wednesday, 5:30-7pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Internet Jumpstart Class

The class is intended for people who would like to learn more about the mail program Outlook Express, which is a subset of Microsoft Outlook. The first class is entirely on e-mail and the second class is for people who have never seen the Internet, who have not been on the Internet or who are on the Internet but are just beginning to find their way around.

Contact: Sandy Knight

<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Saturday of even numbered months, 9am-noon.

Where: Learning Center
Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★

Introduction to Photo Editing

Due to member interest, two back-to-back classes will be held the 2nd Saturday of each month. Requirements are the attendee should be an intermediate computer user (no beginners, please) and should already have a graphics software program on their PC. We will primarily use Photoshop Elements software, although we will also use Corel PhotoPaint and ArcSoft Photostudio occasionally.

Contact: Clarke Bird

<cbird@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd Saturday, 8-10am, 10am-noon

Pre-registration: Yes - Learning Center
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Power Point class

A new PowerPoint class will start in January 2005. See Significant Happenings Page 8. Pre-registration is required.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: call

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes
Technical Rating: ★

Windows XP Class

This class is intended to help you make the transition to Windows XP the latest version of Microsoft's Operating System. Subjects covered include the features of and how to configure Windows XP.

Contact: Sandy Knight

<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Saturdays of odd numbered months, 9am - noon.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Word 2000 Class

Become familiar with Word 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, view, format, save and print a Word document. Also work with templates, multiple documents, insert files, objects and pictures. Optional textbook: Word 2000 Step by Step book (this will be helpful but is not required). Student should have basic knowledge of Windows and be familiar with operating the mouse and keyboard.

Contact: Joe Haggard, 342-5373

When: First four Tuesdays of even-numbered months (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec), 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

FEE-BASED CLASSES

Photoshop Elements & Photoshop 7 Class - \$

2005 Schedule:

March thru April - Elements 2 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

May thru June - Photoshop 7 instruction classes (8 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

July thru August - Elements 2 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

September thru October - Photoshop 7 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Fridays 1pm - 5pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: (includes textbook) \$120 non members (includes one year membership to Alamo PC), \$90 Alamo PC members

Pre-registration: Yes - call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Photoshop Workshops - \$

March thru December - Open to anyone who has previously taken the basic Photoshop 7 classes at Alamo PC

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Thursdays 1pm - 5pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: (includes written instructions) \$20 per month for Alamo PC members only

Pre-registration: Yes - call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Senior Comp Class - \$

Introductory classes for people 45 and over. New classes begin approximately every two months. Classes are held at the Resource Center Lab and meet for two hours once a week for six weeks. Courses offered: Intro to Computers 1&2 and MS Word and Internet/E-mail.

Contact: Ed & Audry Henkin
www.seniorcomp.org

When: see page 10 for schedule

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 includes textbook

Pre-registration: Yes - call 736-0080

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Introduction to MS Access Databases Class - \$

This class is a hands-on beginner's class on Microsoft Access offered in four 4-hour sessions (16 hours total) over four consecutive weekends. The focus is on designing and building database applications. The fee includes a syllabus and a textbook. Prerequisites: Experience using Microsoft Office programs such as Word and Excel.

Contact: Joe Brazell,

<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 210-345-2207

When: contact Learning Center

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 Alamo PC Members; \$75 Non-Members

Pre-Registration: Required - Call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080. Technical Rating: ★★

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

Contact: Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

When: Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

Where: Learning Center

Fees: 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

Pre-registration: Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

Technical Rating: *

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call John Gaddis at 494-9449.

1 Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

2 Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

Step One

0	ACT!	28	Quattro Pro
1	Access	29	Quick Books
2	AlphaFour	30	Quicken
6	dBase	31	Photo Album
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23	Paint Shop Pro	47	Mozilla
24	Adobe Photoshop	48	MySQL
25	Crystal Reports	49	.Net
26	PowerPoint	50	Windows XP

Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(2)	Tom Drawert	696-9601	M-F 6-9pm; S/S 9am-6pm	
(12,24)	Steve Northover	497-5750	M-F 7-9pm; S/S 12-3pm	
(6)	Bowen Moursund	736-1791	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Keith Marbach	(830)303-9344	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Ed Conner	696-0191	4-7pm	
(9, 10, 16, 23, 30, 32, 33, 35, 42)	John Bolton	658-3060	M-F 6-9pm;	
(0, 10, 11, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 42)	Jean Smith	822-1133	M-F 10am-8pm; Sun 12-8pm	
(11, 14)	Bob Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	
(14)	Bob Battaglia	651-5642	9am-7pm	
(18)	Lou Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	louharris@alumni.utexas.net
(18, 23, 31)	Herb Langthorp	651-6087	M-F 6-10pm; 6-9:30pm on S/S	pokeypub@satx.rr.com
(44, 45, 46, 47, 48)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	M-F 7-9pm;S/S 12-6pm	
(21)	Paul Woods	653-8940	4-7pm	
(25)	Barry Woitena		M-F 9-5pm	dallasmx@swbell.net
(28)	Brian Collie	828-1505	M-Sat 10am-5pm	
(36)	Christel Villarreal			cvillarreal@stic.net
(37)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	9am-9pm	
(9,42, 43)	Frank Flores	344-2231	M-Sat 9am-1pm	frflores@grandecom.net
(10, 43)	Mario Flores	566-4048	10am-11pm. Leave name, number.	
(8, 13, 26)	Robert Carrasco			carrasco_r@yahoo.com
(1, 10, 25, 26, 36)	Joseph Kubon	828-6281 x 1554	12noon - 8pm M-F and S/S	
(1, 10, 36)	David de Leon	614-3100	1-4pm M/F 12noon-8pm Sat & Sun.	
(9, 14, 16, 32, 36, 40, 41,42, 43)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	M-Sat 9am-3pm	service@pcpro4u.com
(40, 41, 50)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com

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Classified Ads

E-mail or snail mail (address on page 3) your ad to the Editor, PC Alamo at: editor@alamopc.org. Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

- Free** Free to anyone who needs them:
FAX paper rolls, one new, one half used.
Heat sensitive paper. (8 1/2 x 98 ft.)
I got a new FAX machine that doesn't use them, so if someone wants them...
Email me for more info: joecool@satx.rr.com
- For Sale** 100Gig hard drive, 512Mg RAM, Flat screen monitor, Speakers (with subwoofer), DVD drive, CD/DVD writer (separate drive) \$700, negotiable. richardstrout@hotmail.com
- For Sale** View Sonic Professional Series P75f+ Flat Screen CRT 17" monitor. Purchased June 1, 2004. Hot key to boost brightness levels for intense, vivid colors with video, DVD, graphics and gaming. Toggle back to normal brightness for text. Ultra-fine 0.25mm aperture grille pitch. \$99 call Sandy @ 372-9985 or sknight@satx.rr.com
- For Sale** Hewlett Packard Laser Jet 1100se black and white printer with extra unopened Laser Jet Toner Cartridge. Used occasionally for 3 months. No problems. \$65 total. Contact Doris at 494-2402
- For Sale** Dell DM 4500/100 mhz, 20gig, 128 RAM XP Home
Dell DM 4500s/400 mhz, 80gig, 256 RAM XP Home
Each with Harmon/Kardon speakers, keyboards, mouse. Dell Monitors E772 and P992, APC Surge Arrest Pro included.
All for \$800 or best offer 822-5531 Charley
- Wanted** Handspring Deluxe PDA. 646-7856.
Mary Sidorsky
- Wanted** Someone to teach me Publisher and Access, will pay. Contact [<jwoody39@netzero.net>](mailto:jwoody39@netzero.net)



Senior Comp
A program of Seniors teaching Seniors
Classes starting every few weeks.
No previous experience necessary.
Small Classes with hands on training.
We hope to "empower" our Seniors to be active participants in the information age.



100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color

Alamo PC logo

Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

Your membership number entitles you to a full year of membership privileges. Established in 1983, this non-profit, all-volunteer organization is dedicated to helping members keep up with trends and technologies.

Monthly Meetings

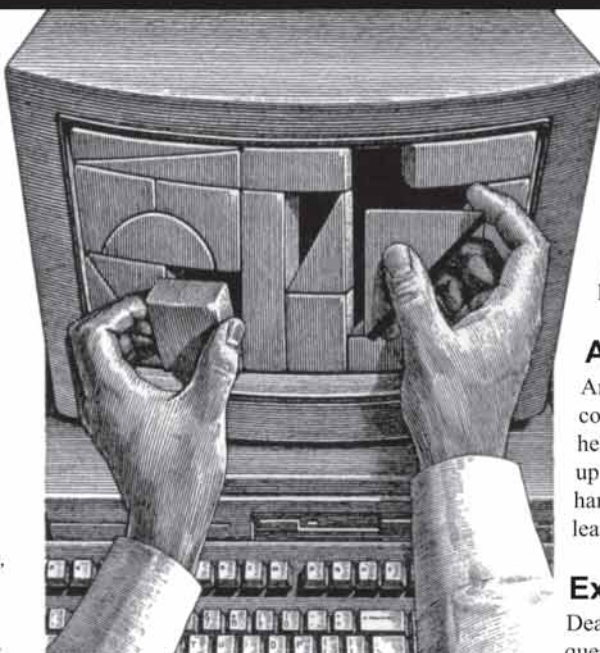
Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

Award-Winning Magazine

When you join Alamo PC, you'll receive its award-winning magazine, *PC Alamode*, each month. You'll learn of group activities and you'll enjoy the reviews of new products from your fellow members. Regular columnists will give you insight to this fast-paced, dynamic industry. As a member, you can sell your outgrown stuff in our FREE Classified ads section.

Special Interest Groups and Classes

Alamo PC offers more than 30 Study Groups and classes on specific software programs for beginners to expert. These small groups typically meet once a month in one of our two hands-on computer labs or classrooms and provide an opportunity to get answers in an informal setting. There are groups for word processing, Web design, graphics and programming and even study groups to help you get Microsoft Certified. You can attend as many SIGs as you'd like and, as you become experienced, even lead one!



Internet (www.alamopc.org)

Alamo PC is on the Internet, and more importantly, Alamo PC can help you get on the Internet too. If you're already on the Internet, attending one of Alamo PC's Internet SIGs will help you to become a savvy Internet surfer.

Alamo PC SeniorComp

Are you age 45 or older and not into computers or the Internet yet? Let us help. Contact Alamo PC today and sign up for the very next class. Classes are hands-on at a pace to match your learning style.

Expert Help

Deadlocked with a computer problem or question? Get access to personal help from expert Alamo PC members. Just call! If you need someone to diagnose hardware and software problems, try "THE DOCTOR IS IN," a free clinic where members bring in their computers and allow our experts to help diagnose and often fix many PC ailments.

APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

To join, return the application below or sign up online at www.alamopc.org. Your \$45 dues covers your entire family!e. You may use your credit card or send your personal check. If you need more information, call (210) 736-0700. Shortly after joining, you'll receive a membership card entitling you to all rights and privileges and discounts. **JOIN TODAY!**

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE: Call 210-736-0700 for details.



Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. This information will be kept in confidence - it will be used for planning purposes only

FIRST: _____ MI _____ LAST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: ____/____/____ OCCUPATION: _____

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please accept my membership for: ☐ 1 year - \$45 ☐ 2 Years - \$85 ☐ 3 Years - \$125 ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Method of payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card # _____ EXP DATE: ____/____/____ SIGNATURE: _____

Make checks payable to Alamo PC Organization and mail to: **Alamo PC, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

IMPORTANT ☐ I do not authorize Alamo PC Organization to release my name address and phone to selected vendors

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If you employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to **Alamo PC Organization** and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.

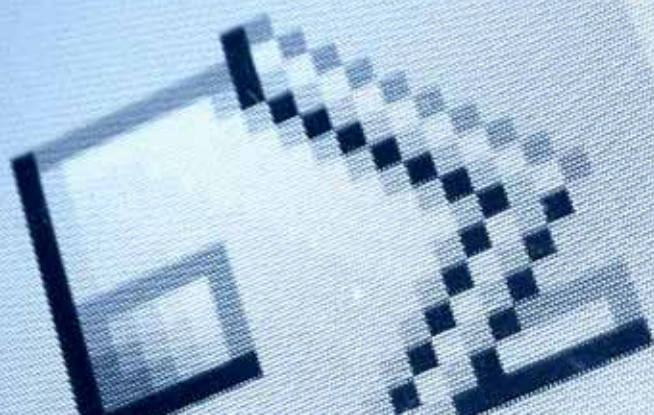
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